

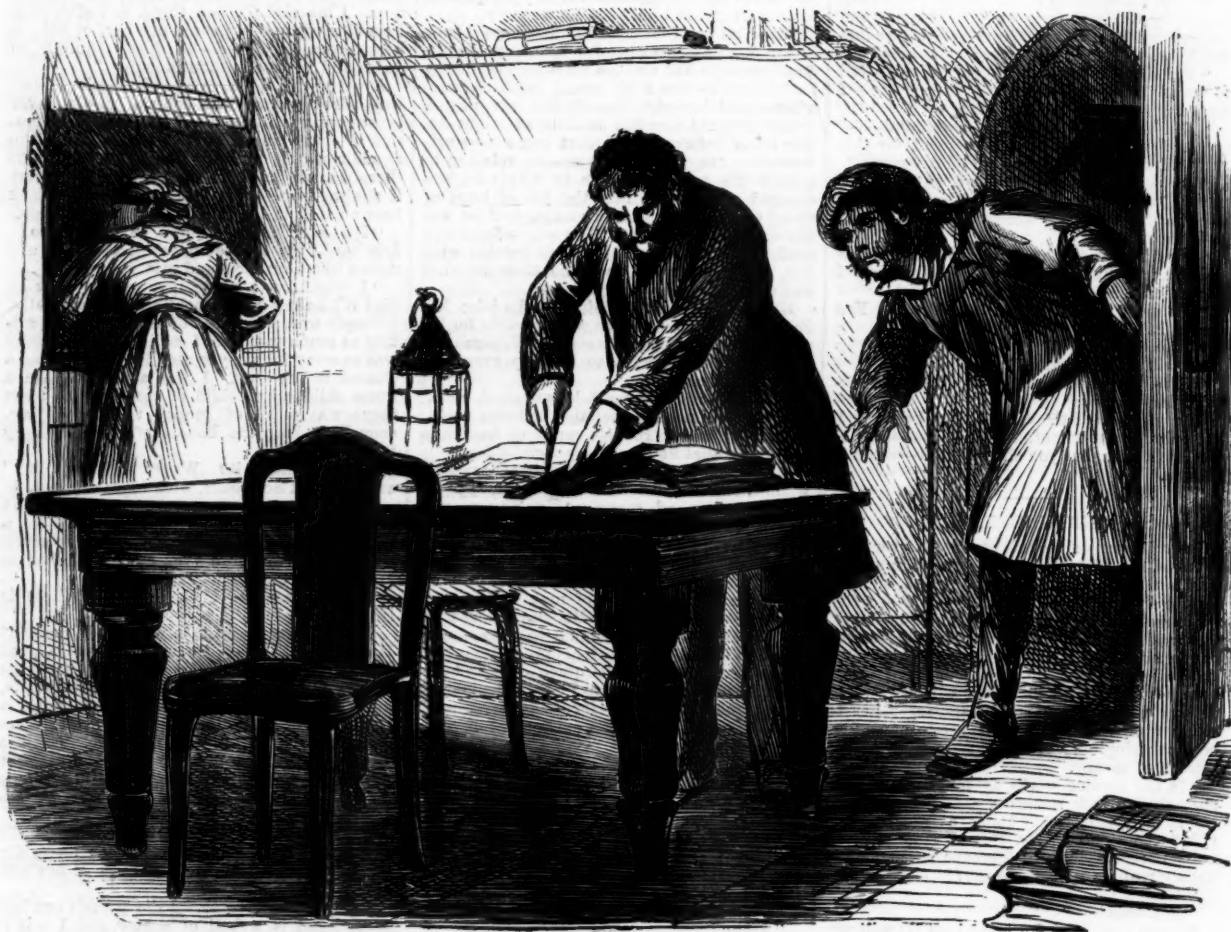
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[FOILED.]

SNOWDROP'S FORTUNES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"From her Own Lips," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXI.

LADY WREXHAM had some sort of a light cloak over her handsome costume, and she had added a veil to her headgear; but he was sure of her identity, and wondered not a little at her presence in those musty precincts.

"Who is she gone to see, I wonder?" he said to himself, and cautiously crept to the door into which she had disappeared. The names thereon told him nothing. The door was in process of renovation, and more than half of the letters had been scraped off preparatory to repainting. He tried the cabman, but that worthy was of the surly order of men, and told him to mind his own business when he tried to get out of him where he had taken the lady from.

"A fare's a fare," he said, "and where I get 'em is between them and me. If you want to know, wait for the lady and ask her yourself."

But that would not do at all, and Hartley returned, very much exercised in his mind, to find that his lady had reached home before him, and was much displeased at his absence without leave. His business in Gray's-inn had been more interesting, and had taken longer than he had expected, and Lady Wrexham and her cab had got away long before him.

He questioned the servants who had gone with her cautiously, but they declared he must have been mistaken. Their lady had only been to Swan and Edgar's and Madame Louise's. She had come out of the former shop almost directly after she entered it, and told them they need not wait there. She was going to Madame Louise's with the Duchess of Edenawell, and they had better drive about slowly and call for her in an hour or so.

They had gone off and come back at the time she had mentioned to find her waiting for them, and that was all. She had managed the whole affair with infinite tact and skill. She had gone in at the Regent-street entrance of the shop and walked quietly out at the Piccadilly side, taking the first cab she saw to Gray's-inn, and astonishing Alfred Scrivener who received

her in the outer office, beyond measure by her sudden appearance.

"Is Mr. Sayers in?" she asked, breathlessly; "ask him to come and speak to me if he is."

"He is engaged just now, madam," said the clerk, who knew her perfectly, but who saw that she meant to be *incognito*, and respected her wish.

"Then put me somewhere where I can wait for him. I don't want all the people that come here to see me; that is—"

"Certainly, madam; walk this way, if you please."

He ushered her into a tiny room off Mr. Sayers's private office, where clients fondly imagined themselves strictly private, but where the wily lawyer could see and form his opinion of them before they were admitted to his presence, through a subtly contrived spy hole, which no one would ever have suspected.

He chuckled to himself as he saw who his visitor was.

"My lady," he muttered, "and with something in her head, she is bursting with it, whatever it is. Has anything gone wrong? No



That is not in her face. Never mind what it is, my lady, your appearance here means money to me, whatever your motive may be, or whatever use I make of your visit."

He managed to appear a bland gentleman of business by the time he was ready to receive Lady Wrexham, which he did as soon as possible, guessing from her manner and appearance that her visit was a secret one. He had seen the cab drive up, and he knew full well that a four-wheeler was not her ladyship's usual means of locomotion.

"I have something to say to you," she said, hurriedly, when she was safe in his room, and he had made sure that Alfred Scrivener could not hear. "I have thought of something."

"I'm all attention. Will your ladyship tell it me as lucidly and as briefly as possible. I am sure your time is precious."

"Oh, yes; Lord Wrexham is out, and—"

"And you have snatched a moment for this visit. I am honoured, indeed. Pray go on."

She was not wanting in sense, and she did not waste his time in talk. What she had to say she said in as few words as possible; and he listened gravely.

"I understand," he said, when she had finished; "I have thought of it before, but I have been fearful of his lordship."

"He must not know till it is done. You can do it."

"H'm, it is a risk."

"I will give anything."

"Five thousand pounds, for instance, nothing less will do."

She winced a little at the sum he named, but only for a moment, and then she said, "It is a large sum, but you shall have it—when it is done."

CHAPTER XXII.

LADY WREXHAM looked at the lawyer and shivered slightly. Five thousand pounds! It was a terrible sum to have to raise, but the service she wanted at his hands meant security for herself and peace of mind for her husband. She was mistress of a considerable fortune, but to raise such a sum without her husband's knowledge, and she did not intend Lord Wrexham to know of it till it was all over, would tax her powers considerably, and force her to tell her man of business a good many fibs, besides crippling her for a long time in the matter of money.

"Is the service worth as much as that?" she asked, a little uneasily.

"It is worth twenty times as much if the risk is considered," Mr. Sayers said with an uncomfortable smile. "Perhaps your ladyship hardly realizes what it means?"

"I think I do."

"It means—"

"Hush! we need not talk about it; will you do it?"

"I will, but the money must be ready."

"It shall be."

"And I must have what is wanted for expenses."

"You will not find me stingy; when will you want that part of it?"

"When my plans are arranged I will let you know. For the rest—the payment I mean."

"You will give me time."

"I must have it when I put what you want into your hand; have it ready, my lady, or—"

"Or what?"

"I will take it to some one I know of who will give the price, and more, for the information it will convey."

"Don't play me false; you shall have it, I swear it."

"And you shall have safety, I swear that also; you shall have what you purchase of me to do what you like with. A lucifer match will make quick work of any bar to Lady Laura Carlyon's prospects. Don't look so frightened, my lady, it shall be done."

"I hope there is no occasion to be frightened," Lady Wrexham said. But she was

horribly frightened, in spite of her little laugh and her endeavour to appear at ease.

She went back, and was taken up where she had told her coachman to call for her, and astonished Hartley beyond measure by appearing at home as we have related. Alfred Scrivener wondered also at the visit of the lady to his master; he knew it had something to do with the mystery of the little girl, but he had not the clue. That unfortunate accident of his and his wife's illness had hindered him getting at any information, and Bill Jones had been hustled out of the country too quickly for him to get at him.

When he went home after business hours he found a letter waiting for him from an old employer who had no idea what he was doing, for he kept in the background in Mr. Sayers' affairs, and brought himself and his ruined name into public notice as little as might be. The letter informed him that some new evidence had cropped up in a matter relating to almost the last great case in which he was engaged, and offered him the job of hunting up certain memoranda concerning it if he was not engaged elsewhere. The pay offered was good, and his few days of annual holiday were due, and he resolved to spend them in what was wanted.

He was glad and grateful for the job; Mr. Sayers paid as little as was possible for his work, and the little house in Goldenhawk Gardens was expensive to keep up even with the strictest economy.

"I wonder if he would let me go at once," he said to himself as he laid the letter down; "I'll ask him—there isn't much on hand now—nothing that he wants especially for."

He had hardly thought of making the request when there was a knock at the door, and to his astonishment and surprise Mr. Sayers presented himself. His clerk began to think there was witchcraft in it, or that his employer could read his thoughts, when the very first words the lawyer spoke were to offer him his holiday at once instead of making him wait till the next week for it. Mr. Sayers was not in the habit of being obliging to those under him, but it was no part of his programme that Alfred Scrivener with his quick eyes and ears should be in London when he took the journey he was contemplating—for Lady Wrexham's business would entail his going some distance out of town.

Scrivener was better away, he said to himself, and went forthwith to his clerk's house to offer him the very thing he had been going to ask for.

"Great wit's jump, some one says," Mr. Sayers said with a laugh, when Scrivener told him what had been in his mind. "You and I seem to be in the same mind for once. You'll be at the office this day fortnight."

"I will."

He did not ask what his clerk was going to do with himself—he supposed what such people usually did: get to the cheapest seaside place he could find for a few days perhaps, or if that was impossible, lounge away the time at home till his period of leisure was over. It was almost too good to be true the chance of earning money once more on his own account and no questions asked; he would be able to give his wife a few days by the sea when he came back without the dismal knowledge that every little extra, and perhaps some actual necessities, would have to be done without for a long time to pay for the unwonted indulgence.

The business was not disagreeable: he had to go to a remote Welsh parish, and there hunt up some of the old people and look up the register for the records of sundry births, deaths, and marriages, and take up a clue to a suspected forgery which has nothing to do with our story except the chance which took Alfred Scrivener to Llandrydd. He went and began his business, getting leave from the clergyman of the parish to have access to the church at whatever time he wished, and pursuing his researches quietly and methodically.

The old clerk who officiated in church on

Sundays, and generally attended people who wanted to look at the registers, was laid up, and his attendant was generally a sour-faced wrinkled old woman who was paw opener and cleaner, and who by her tongue was decidedly English.

"I lived in the vicar's family for many years when I was a young woman," she confided to Mr. Scrivener one evening when she was cleaning, and he was occupied in comparing the registers with other documents; "I was housemaid in his father's house, and—if I hadn't been a fool I might have been well off now. I married for one thing, and after that I could never call a penny my own or keep a home over my head—he drank himself to death and left me without a penny."

A garrulous old woman and very brainless. But Alfred Scrivener let her run on—he never let an opportunity pass of acquiring information of every kind. There was nothing in the twaddle of this old body to interest him, but there was no knowing what she might let out if she went on—some little thing that might bear on the business he had in hand perhaps.

"It's hard for a woman to be tied to a drunkard," he said sympathetically, and she sighed like a furnace, and said yes it was.

"I might have made my fortune after he died if I hadn't been a fool," she said presently. "People were very good to me, and I was getting as much work as I could do; everybody was so sorry for me you see. But there came a chance in my way. I was asked to take a nurse child, a love child of course it was; but there was a lot of money to be paid me, enough to keep me handsome, and the baby too, and—"

"Did you take it? Whose child was it?" asked Alfred Scrivener, with eager interest.

"I don't know no more than the dead," the woman replied. "I took the brat, and I got a big lump of money, and I was to have so much a year; but no more ever came, and I never knew where to send for any."

"What became of the child? Where is it?"

"What have you got to do with it, master? It died; that's what became of it, and a good thing, too. The whole business unsettled me for any work that was steady-like afterwards, and I got that law in the world, that many a time I thought I would drown myself; there seemed to be nothing for me to do. But one day the master came across me and brought me here; and I suppose I shall die here and lay my old bones out yonder, under the trees!"

"Isn't everybody that money ruins," Mr. Scrivener said, thoughtfully, longing, he hardly knew why, to hear more details of her odd story.

"No, but it did me. Fifty pounds put into one's hand is a deal of money, and I was to have a lot more, so the man said that gave it me, a smooth-faced oily-tongued villain; and I was so soft that I never thought to have any names or anything to make the thing binding, and he went away, and that was all."

"You never saw him again?"

"I have never set eyes on him from that day to this, and never shall. Mercy be good to me! help me! save me! I've raised his ghost talking about him. That's him!"

And the woman sprang down from where she had been standing, till she crouched upon the floor, and the clerk, looking up to see what was the cause of her fright, saw to his unutterable amazement the figure of his master coming up to the church door. To escape was his first thought; and he quietly unlocked the vestry door and slipped out by the back way before Mr. Sayers had time to see him. He could hear all that passed by crouching down under one of the open windows, and he hid himself among the bushes, which grew very close to the wall on that side of the church.

Mr. Sayers had reached the end of his journey, and purposed doing what he had come there for, some time within the next twenty-four hours. He had visited the vicar, who told him, in answer to his inquiry, that it was after

hours for searching the register, which was his object in visiting Llandrydd, but that a gentleman was already there to whom permission had been given to enter the church when he would, and that there would be no difficulty in getting a sight of the books if he particularly wished to do so at once.

Mr. Sayers intimated that he did wish it, and the vicar showed him the way to the church, telling him that he would find a woman in charge, to whom he was to use his name. It was rather perplexing to find the woman crouching on the floor as if she were frightened, and the church door wide open. He went in and roused her up, but she shrank from him in such evident fear, that he thought she must be mad, till he looked full into her face and recognized her.

"Nannie Beatson!" he exclaimed. "Where have you hidden yourself all these years? you see I know you."

"And so do I know you, worse luck, all but your name. I haven't hidden myself anywhere. Why did you lie to me and promise me money that I never got?"

"We lost you. You shall have money yet if you will speak the truth. Where is the child?"

"Dead!"

"That is a lie to begin with; you knew better, so do I."

"I know nothing."

"What did you do with it?"

"What if I won't tell you?"

"I think you had better, you will save yourself a good deal of trouble and some punishment, maybe."

"I did not kill it."

"No, perhaps because you dared not. Where did you see it last?"

"On a nurse's lap in Alnwick Workhouse; they found it."

"Where you lost it, I suspect."

"Well, what of that. They kept it and christened it and brought it up for aught I know; it was more than I could do. I had enough to do to keep myself, when I was deceived and left to starve for aught you knew. What do you want here now?"

"Only to look for a register."

"Marriage?"

"Yes."

She pointed to a volume lying on the vestry table.

"Anything within twenty years you will find there," she said. "Where's the gentleman that was looking in it, I wonder; he was here a minute ago."

Mr. Sayers looked for what he wanted, and found it and shut the volume with a bang.

"I shall have to come again to-morrow," he said, "and make a memorandum about it; see that the other person, whoever it is, does not come at the same time, will you? Here's an earnest that I mean to pay up old scores."

He slipped some money into her hand and walked away, and Alfred Scrivener came out of his hiding-place and went home, resolved to make a third at the interview, unseen and unsuspected, if possible.

CHAPTER XXIII

"So far so good," Mr. Sayers said to himself as he left the church. "Better than I expected. I wanted to find that woman; how did she come here, I wonder. She is the very person to be easily hoodwinked. I could have done all I wanted to-night if I had not had a feeling that the person that antiquated parson spoke of was somewhere about. Who is he and what does he want here when I want the place to myself? Nannie Beatson will obey me and keep him off when I come to-morrow, and then, my lady, for your five thousand pounds."

He did not sleep very well at the little village inn. He was plagued by unpleasant dreams all bearing on the business that had brought him there, and he woke with a gasp and a shudder from a vision of a detective's hand on his shoulder—a detective who had the face of his clerk, Alfred Scrivener.

"The devil fly away with him," was his mental apostrophe when he found it was a dream and nothing else. "I suppose I must have been thinking of the fellow to make me fancy such a thing; I'll get it over as soon as I can and get back to town."

Alfred Scrivener was no more able to sleep than his employer, but lay awake, his fertile brain concocting all sorts of schemes to find out what was going on without being himself seen; he was safe as far as any mention of his name was concerned, for he had taken one he was in the habit of using many years ago, when all his life was secrecy, and Mr. Sayers was not familiar with it; it would have told nothing if he had heard it a dozen times, and he should never see any one at all resembling his clerk while he was in Llandrydd.

Indeed, Mr. Scrivener left the village early in the morning and did not come back till night, very late at night, long after a curious thing had happened to Mr. Sayers. As luck would have it his researches were oddly put off till after dark, a fact at which he fumed and fretted not a little inwardly, though to all appearance he waited with the most exemplary patience till the church and the registers should both be at liberty.

It was rapidly growing dark when at last Nannie Beatson came to attend him with a lantern. A very few minutes would do all he wanted, he told her, when she was inclined to grumble at being taken into the church after dark; it was haunted, she said, and Nannie had a wholesome fear of ghosts in churches or out, and could hardly be brought to believe that they did not turn out for a sort of parade as soon as darkness fell upon the earth.

She was inclined to serve Mr. Sayers, whose name she did not know even now, for he was going to be liberal, he had given her proof of that; his largesse was already an important addition to the little hoard in the old tea-pot on the shelf, and he promised well, at any rate; she would not lose sight of him if she could help it. It was something to have company with her when she opened the church door, and a gust of chill air from some open window or ventilator nearly extinguished her light.

"Come along, and don't let that candle out," Mr. Sayers said hastily, as he nearly tumbled over something in his way. "I don't know the place, you know, and I don't want to break my neck."

"And I wouldn't be here in the dark for all the money any one would give me," Nannie said. "I'll take care of the light, never fear."

It burnt more steadily in the vestry, a comfortable room enough, for the vicar liked a cosy place and had no idea of putting on his priestly vestments in a carpetless, fireless room.

"That's more like it," the lawyer said, "open that lantern, and let me have a little more light, will you?"

"The vicar don't like me to carry a naked candle about the place at night," Nannie said; "he's dreadful afraid of fire is the vicar; he had a church burnt down one time, he had, and he's that particular—"

"Rubbish! I'm not going to burn the church down," Mr. Sayers said. "Give me the light—I can't see anything unless the light is opened."

He took the lantern, which truth to tell was not of the brightest, and set it open on the table before him. A bright light was thus thrown on the book she gave him, and he set to work to find what he wanted. She had no sort of interest in his researches; the people who had been married, born, and buried in the parish of Llandrydd were none of her kindred; she was an alien and a stranger, and she watched him with blinking eyes wishing he would make haste and let her get back home. Presently he stopped turning over the leaves.

"Have you found it, sir?" she asked.

"Yes."

She did not see what page he was upon nor mark anything that was passing, for he called out in a startled voice, "What's that?" at the same time springing from his seat with his

face turned towards the vestry window, which looked out to the village.

"What's that, sir?" she asked.

"I cannot tell; it looked like a fire—a bright gleam of light that shot up suddenly—just there."

He pointed in the direction of Nannie's cottage, and she went to the window in sudden terror, straining her eyes to see what he had spoken of. The minute gained was enough for Mr. Sayers: with a sharp knife and a thin piece of wood which he had in readiness he cut a leaf from the volume before him so cleverly that there was scarcely any trace of the mischief. The loss might never be discovered. People seldom wanted to search parish registers in these remote districts where everybody knew everybody else, and folks were born and married and buried without any desire to go further than the boundaries they so carefully beat every boundary day.

With the leaf in his hand Mr. Sayers shut the book; another moment and it would have been transferred to his pocket and safe, when somehow or other—how he never knew—the light went out, and a hand as cold as that of a corpse grasped his with a grip of iron. The lawyer was a brave man—he feared very little either earthly or supernatural—but for one brief moment his brain seemed to reel with the suddenness of the fright; then his hand was loosed and the paper was gone, and he was conscious of Nannie Beatson howling dismally in a corner, and the sound of a door closing somewhere.

"Hold that row," he said, angrily; "what did you do that for?"

"Do what, master?"

"Put out the light in that insane fashion. Where are the matches? Get them and don't make that noise."

"I didn't put the light out—it was the ghost," Nannie gasped. "I saw him!"

"Saw who? Get up and find a light and don't be a fool."

"The ghost—his whole hand was as big as the roof, and it came down on the candle and put it out. Oh, Lord have mercy upon us, what shall we do?"

"What shall we do? Why get a light and find out what has happened," the lawyer said. "You have been pawing about and overturned it, and frightened yourself at your own shadow."

"I have never moved from here if I were to die this minute," asserted Nannie; and indeed when Mr. Sayers after some difficulty found his own wax vestas and procured a light, he could see plainly that the woman was paralyzed by terror, and had not moved from her position by the window.

She was there, and he was not hurt, and the book lay open on the table before him by the overturned lantern, but the paper he had held in his hand—the leaf he had cut out—was gone. There was no trace of any one having entered the room, and he was half inclined to think that there was something supernatural in it all, and that Satan, or some of his agents, had been at work.

"Get up," he said again, angrily, to the shivering Nannie, "and be sensible if you can. What did you see? Whoever it was came on me from behind, confound them! Who put the light out?"

"It was the ghost, I tell you," she reiterated. "Let me go and fetch the parson, master. He'll lay him."

"Nonsense. Fetch the police, more likely, if there are any in this heaven-forgotten hole. I've been robbed, I tell you."

"Robbed! What of it?"

"Everything, for aught I know. The notes I was making, for one thing."

"Well, you can make them again you know," she said, staring at his pale face. "You're as white as a ghost, that you are. You are as frightened as I am."

It wasn't quite the same sort of fear, but he was a great deal more frightened, if she had only known it. His secret was in the keeping of some one else, and who that some one

might be he had not the least idea. Could it be possible that Lord Wrexham had followed him to this remote Welsh village, and taken his prize out of his hand at the moment of his becoming possessed of it? Or had her ladyship employed some cheaper agent to seize what he had journeyed so far to obtain? His brain reeled when he thought of what might come of the accident, and he searched everywhere for the piece of paper—the record of Rupert Carlyon's former marriage with the girl that Arthur Fortescue had loved so dearly and mourned so bitterly.

Nannie Beaton, whose only wish was to get out of the place where such an awful thing had happened, and who was expecting every moment to have another visitation from the Evil One, wondered not a little at the pertinacity with which he searched every corner of the vestry, and every part of his own clothing, for what had disappeared.

"Lor, master, you can write it all over again by daylight," she said. "Don't come to the church again after dark; it isn't the proper time. All the spirits get about when it's dark, and —"

"Nonsense," he said, sharply; "I tell you it is my own notes I am looking for; a memorandum that will let out a secret if it is found anywhere, and that was no part of my business in coming here."

"But you must tell the parson, sir, and have it cried. Most things that are lost in Llandrydd are cried, and then if any one has got them they are found."

"Is she as much of an idiot as she appears, I wonder?" Mr. Sayers said to himself, checking an oath that rose to his lips at Nannie's words. "Look here, my good woman," he went on, aloud, "I am not going to the parson, nor any one else about what I have lost; it is only a memorandum, of no use to any one but myself. To call attention to it would only be to put things into people's heads that are better left out of them. See you hold your tongue about this business, and tell no one—not even the parson—what has happened in the church."

"Not tell the parson?" she said, aghast. "How is the ghost to be laid if he don't know about it?"

"It wasn't the ghost; it was some mischievous interloper, who has thought to frighten us," Mr. Sayers said. "Shut up the place and come away, and to-morrow I will look again for what I want, and take fresh notes."

Mr. Sayers stayed at Llandridd till the next day, and duly went into the church, telling the vicar that he had found what he wanted, and taking away with him a copy of a marriage entry in the register, selected at haphazard, as a blind.

He could find nothing to hint at the person who had made a third at the evening's search in the vestry, and he failed to see the other stranger who was in the village on the same errand.

He found out where he had been staying; but he was out, and he had no excuse for seeking him. The description given of him by the woman in whose house he was staying told the lawyer nothing; Alfred Scrivener was too wary not to have provided against being recognized when he did not wish to be so—and there were many reasons why this visit of his to Wales was to be kept a secret for the present; he was thoroughly enjoying it—it was a taste of the old life and the probable step in the direction of a fresh place in the world. He little dreamed of what the fates would throw in his way when he journeyed to that remote Welsh village.

No one had seen any one about the church on the evening of the mishap, except a little girl, who declared that a man in a smock frock had bid her good-evening under the churchyard wall after dark. She was afraid of him, and she ran away as fast as she could, but he had not come after her, and she had not seen him again. He was a farm-labourer, she thought, like her father, and it was extremely unlikely that such a person would want to go

into the church and knock out the light of any one engaged about the books.

Indeed, the place having the reputation of being haunted as it had, was enough to deter even the men from passing the gates at night alone and unattended. Hunt as he would, Mr. Sayers could find out nothing, and there was nothing for it but for him to go back to London and confess that he had been outwitted.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ALFRED SCRIVENER was the man in the smock frock who had spoken to the little girl, and he was away in the woods round Llandridd, with the precious paper in his pocket-book, when Mr. Sayers was looking for him. He had not the least idea what his employer was looking for, when he saw him out the leaf from the register; but the first look at the entries enlightened him, and put him in possession of the whole facts of the case. He had been employed about the "Carlingford Mystery," as the disappearance of the daughter of Mr. Westbrook had been styled officially.

The search for the missing girl had been conducted with as much privacy as possible; her father and her young lover had both desired above all things to keep her folly and lack of duty a secret for the sake of all concerned, and the public at large knew very little about the flight of Geraldine Westbrook. That her father had gone to his grave sorrowing for his child, and that the life of the young cousin who loved her so truly, had been well-nigh blighted by the shock, was known to their immediate friends, and no others; and years had flown by, and the matter had been almost forgotten. Then had come Alfred Scrivener's disgrace and humiliation; and other cases had cropped up much more exciting than the Carlingford business; the world had gone round, and no one stopped to ask what had become of the young lady, or whether she had been heard of.

It was startling to the ex-detective to see her name, and to light thus suddenly on the whole clue to the odd things that he had more than half-suspected. There in his hand he held the proof of the marriage of Rupert Carlyon with Geraldine Westbrook, and he knew the wording of the old Earl's will, by which the money went to the eldest child of his son. There was the whole history in a nutshell, the motive for the concealment of the child, and the theft of the marriage register.

"My fortune's made!" he said to himself; "sure, whichever way I work it. I see it all now—the half links of the chain that I have been unable to put together; I hold them all in my hand. Mr. Sayers may be a very clever man, but I think I am a match for him. Let me get back to town without his suspecting where I have been, and I'm a made man."

His plans were scarcely made, he would take time to think, and first of all he must make sure that Mr. Sayers suspected nothing. Of that he was pretty well satisfied when he witnessed the departure of that gentleman from Llandridd—very pale and worried-looking—and discovered too that the loss of the leaf from the register had not been found out.

Then he finished his business, and made a detour on his own account, despatching a note to his employer from Boulogne, and coming home meekly from thence in a little while. He would keep the secret at present, he thought, till he should find out what Mr. Sayers was likely to do.

"He'll show his hand presently," he said to himself; "I can wait, and to them as waits their time comes round, as some one says in a play: I must have the chain complete before I show what my cards are."

Mr. Sayers was strangely upset by what had happened; he was a cool head enough generally, but he had been so completely outwitted in this matter, and that without the slightest clue to who had done it, that he was entirely at fault. He must make a clean breast of it to her ladyship, and the Earl must be told, but how? He could not say that he had been detected in the

very act of stealing the certificate by an unknown enemy. It was awkward, and even his ready wit could scarcely see a way out of it. His return had been anxiously looked for, and the very morning after he arrived at home—looking so ill that his wife exclaimed in alarm at his altered appearance—a note came from Lady Wrexham. It was brief and only signed with her initials.

"HAVE you succeeded? Pray let me know. I am ready to fulfil my promise if you have."
L. C."

Mr. Sayers groaned aloud as he read the note. "Ready to fulfil her promise is she! Five thousand pounds, and all lost to me!" And he cursed his untoward fate with extreme volubility, till he remembered that the clerk in the outer office had sharp ears, and might be applying them to the keyhole for aught he knew. He waited on her ladyship, who received him with strained cordiality, endeavouring to do all she could to set him at his ease; which he never was quite with her, notwithstanding their boasted intimacy.

She rose from her seat as he came forward and held out her hand to him—a little while ago she would as soon have held it out to a chimney-sweep. He could not help thinking how handsome she looked in her dress of cream-colour, with knots of crimson silk about it, and a bunch of fragrant blossoms at her throat. She was fond of saying she was getting old, but she hardly looked older now than when she was married. The peachy bloom on her cheek, and the brightness of her dark eyes, seemed as fresh as ever, and the oval face did not appear to have lost any of its perfection of contour.

"Well," she said breathlessly, "where is it?"

"I have not found it, my lady."

"Not found it! You went to the wrong place."

"No, I knew the place quite well."

"Then why have you not brought it? You said it would be easy."

"It would have been, but some one has been there before us, Lady Wrexham; the leaf of the register which recorded the marriage is missing."

"Missing! Do you mean it has been stolen?"

"I can come to no other conclusion."

"But who has taken it, and for what? Did you make no enquiries? Did you tell no one?"

The lawyer smiled at her impetuosity, and answered her as quietly as his own trembling nerves would permit.

"To do that would have been to call undue attention to my own proceedings," he said. "I could hardly proclaim that I missed the entry relating to a marriage which it is our whole endeavour to keep secret; to proclaim the loss would have been to publish the fact."

"True," she said, tearing at the flowers on her bosom, in her perplexity and disappointment. "What is to be done now? Where is it gone, and when did it go?"

He thought of the scene in the church—the overturned lantern, and the snatching away of his coveted prize—and groaned to himself.

"Those are questions I cannot answer," he said, with outward calmness. "I only know that I saw the book, and the place where the record used to be—I have seen it before, you know—and the leaf has been neatly cut away; I made what enquiries I could as to who had visited the village, for it is a queer little out-of-the-world place where strangers are noticeable, but I could hear of no one who was likely to have any interest in such a proceeding."

"Then the secret is in the hands of some one else?"

"Not necessarily, the leaf may have been taken for some other entry; there seem to have been three on it, and if so it is doubtless destroyed. I must see his lordship and tell him."

"You will not betray me, he would be very angry."

"Your ladyship need have no fear; I am

sorry things have turned out as they have, but I have done my best to do what you wanted, and to earn the reward."

"That you have not done it has been no fault of yours, I am sure," she said, putting a banknote into his hands. "I am that much indebted to you, at any rate, for the time and trouble you have spent in the matter. You must see my lord and think what can be done. With that secret in some one else's possession my child's future is not secure for a moment."

"Nor mine," Mr. Sayers said to himself, as he thought, with a shiver, of his own position; suppose whoever stole that paper from him had plotted the whole thing, and had witnesses ready to bring forward. Some one must have watched and listened and prowled about, prying into his secrets, and have followed him.

He never gave one thought to Alfred Scrivener; his meek submission and respectful demeanour, and his master's knowledge of his broken life had been a sufficient blind, besides he had gone for his holiday.

He kept up an outward show of coolness while he was talking to Lord Wrexham, to whom he put the case in this wise: he had been in North Wales for a few days, and it had occurred to him to go to Llandrydd to see how many people there were there who would be likely to remember that marriage; it was as well to be prepared in every way, he thought. He spoke of having found Nannie Beaton there, and of her fright and astonishment at the sight of him, and then told how he had looked into the church books, to find the record of the marriage gone. It was as well Lord Wrexham should know, he said, though, for his own part, he did not think much of it; indeed he rather regarded it as a fortunate thing; some one had evidently taken the leaf for the sake of some other entry and so ended their anxiety and their risk together.

Lord Wrexham had little idea with what a sinking heart he told this plausible tale, nor how he dreaded every moment that an accusing hand might be laid on his shoulder, and a voice tell him that he was detected. The Earl was hopefully inclined to take the view of the affair that he had presented to him, and to consider that it was a coincidence and, nothing more, that that particular leaf should be missing; but he was quite ready to agree with Mr. Sayers that some precaution should be taken in case of mishaps. And they spent an hour in the library before the lawyer took his leave in settling what should be the next move of their difficult game.

From Connaught Gardens the lawyer went straight to Goldenhawk Gardens—a very different sort of garden, indeed—and enquired when Mr. Scrivener was coming home.

Mrs. Scrivener received him very civilly, and informed him her husband would return in about a week; had he not written? she asked, he had spoken of doing so in his last letter.

"I have had a few lines," Mr. Sayers said. "I wanted to make sure of where to find him if I wanted him, that's all. Where is he?"

He asked the question suddenly to catch her tripping if possible; it was just a chance that Scrivener might have been deceiving him after all. But Mrs. Scrivener had not been a detective's wife for many years for nothing, and though she knew nothing of her husband's motives she trusted him implicitly. She was ready with her answer at once.

"He's at Boulogne now, sir," Mrs. Scrivener said quietly, producing a letter from her pocket and handing it to her husband's employer; "you will see what he says."

"Oh, in France; enjoying himself, I suppose."

"I hope so—there has not been much enjoyment in his life lately."

"And why did he not take you with him?"

"We couldn't afford such a journey together," was the simple reply; "one of us must be at home to look after the place. I could not pay another person to do it."

"Ah, very true; it is to be hoped times will mend for you some day," Mr. Sayers said kindly enough, and went away feeling very much like

a man groping about in the dark. There was evidently no concealment in the manner of Scrivener's whereabouts, and if he was the other side of the Channel it was impossible for it to have been him who defeated his plans at Llandrydd.

He came back in due course—quiet, respectful, unassuming as ever, and went about his duties apparently unconscious of the change that had come over Mr. Sayers, or the secret anxiety that he could read on that gentleman's face in spite of his efforts to appear at ease. He was doubtful and wavering as to what he should do with the paper that lay so snugly in his pocket-book—and as often happens, Kismet, the "providence that shapes our ends," decided for him as it often does.

(To be continued.)

DREGS AND FROTH.

A STORY OF TO-DAY.

CHAPTER XX.

A PROPHECY REALISED.

"Knowest thou yesterday, its aim and reason?
Work'st thou well to-day for worthy things?
Then calmly wait the morrow's hidden season,
And fear not thou, what hap soo'r it brings."

THE morning broke damp and misty, but brightened as the sun arose, when women and children were early astir in the tiny fishing village, and the earliest rays that penetrated the little square deep-set window of old Jack Jenkins's cottage rested upon the dead man's letter.

Old John, who was first down, saw it, took it up, examined it curiously, and put it down again, took it up again, laughed at it, and going to the foot of the staircase shouted up it:—

"Bess! what do ee think?"

"I caan't tell," replied her voice from above.

"Soas! There's a letter 'pon taable."

"A letter!"

"Ees, shure—a letter!"

"'Twor not theas last night," said Bess coming down in a state of excitement. Then she, too, looked at the letter, turned it over and over, as he had done, examined it with the greatest curiosity, and said:—

"It's may be for Mrs. Cochrane, she'll be waikin' sune."

When the alderman's wife appeared the letter was handed to her by the old fish-wife, with a pleasant:—

"Good mornin' to ee, dear; there's a letter for un."

Mrs. Weeldon looked anxiously at it and said, with a start and a look of astonishment:—

"It is not for me, it is from my husband; it is for you."

"Aw loar!" exclaimed Bess, overwhelmed with the wonder of such a great event. A letter was indeed a novelty here amongst poor old fisher-folk unable to read. The old man who had been busy with some fish-hooks came forward as full of astonishment as his wife was.

"I be maazed as a sheep!" said he.

"There is no post-mark. It must have been brought in the night."

"After we wor a-b-d my dear," said old Jack, nodding.

A visit of that kind was no novelty here, where every door was upon the latch, unfastened by night and day.

The clean slated floor was sanded, and Jack, pointing to the marks of some very muddy feet which went to and fro between the door and the table, said carelessly:—

"Theer—looks't un theer!"

"A man's foot-mark!" exclaimed Mrs. Weeldon, with a strange thrill.

Seeing that all the interest and wonder of her host and hostess were concentrated upon the letter, Mrs. Weeldon asked:—

"Shall I read it for you?"

"Plase do, dear."

So she read:—

"Bank of England notes, ten in number each for fifty pounds, sent for John William and Elizabeth Ann Jenkins, from their long-lost son, John."

"Five hundred pounds!" exclaimed as with one voice, the astounded fisherman and his wife.

"Five hundred pounds in notes on the Bank of England," said Mrs. Weeldon, cheerfully.

"Aw loar! An be thickey thur things bank noates?" said Bess, bewildered by the magnitude of such an almost unimaginable sum.

"Bank notes for five hundred pounds," repeated the lady, smiling.

The old couple eyed them with astonishment, handled them timidly, looked into each other's honest brown faces and laughed aloud.

But there were tears in the mother's eyes.

"I cudn't slalp least night for thenken on un," she said, with gentle sorrow in her voice.

"I thoft on un tell I got that whist an' dismal, 'twore loike as somethun gashly wor a coming," and then with a smile and enforced cheerfulness, "an all the while 'twore oany this letter—little Jackey's letter—an en't five hundred pounds! Aw loar!"

She drew in her quivering breath and heaved a long soft sigh mentioned the "five hundred pounds" in a low awe-smitten tone, and "little Jacky" with a tender smile, raising her big brown hands in wonder at the money, and bringing them gently together as if in the act of prayer when she named her son. Then she asked eagerly:—

"Is theer no moor in un's letter, dearie?"

"Nothing more, mother."

"Naw another word to me," she moaned, "never a word to the mawther as loved un afore all the world!"

Mrs. Weeldon looked pitifully into the poor old woman's face, saw how hard she strove to repress her emotion and keep back her tears, saw her nostrils dilated and quivering, her raised brows knitted, her bosom heaving, and her voice tremulous. She felt deeply the pang this coarse unfeeling act of seeming generosity and penitence had inflicted on one whose nature and feelings he had never either known or appreciated, although she was his mother.

She said to herself in bitterness, "Mother's or wife's, what is a woman's love to such a man as this is?"

Suddenly Old Jack, who had been looking on as if stupefied by the magnitude of his son's gift, smote the table with his iron fist, and with a mighty oath smote it with a blow which almost split it, crying passionately and hoarsely:—

"I doan't know un, an I doant keer for un, but if he be 'shamed o' we, he be 'shamed o' him. Send them theer jemcrackery things back to un—take un away. I valy em no moor nor to I should soa meny dead leaves—let un goo beck!"

Standing there with a fire in his dim eyes that was almost like that of an angry boy, with his big stiff forefinger trembling with strong emotion, there was something grand in the poor old fisherman, who had probably never in his long life possessed even a single golden coin—something that smote loudly at the door of Mrs. Weeldon's heart and brought her to his feet.

"Forgive me, air!" she cried, in a sudden outburst of passionate emotion; "forgive me for telling you a falsehood! I am a poor, fatherless, almost friendless creature, cruelly isolated from those who are my dearest and nearest, the only relatives I have, my mother and si-ter. I am persecuted horribly by a wicked man from whom I am now hiding. I am your son's wife; I am your daughter. I love, honour and admire you. Father! father! will you forgive me?"

The old man looked down upon the lady's upturned face in a dazed bewildered way as if he hardly understood her words. But the tearful old fishwife caught her in her vigorous arms, raised her to her feet with a sudden jerk, held her tightly to her breast and cried:—

"Lor a massy, dearie, why what queer theng

is un doin' ? Forgive un—o' course ull forgive un !"

And then her voice sank to a low quivering whisper, as she said :—

"Who be the cruel man? Doan't say he er my Jacky—doan't now, doan't, ee dear."

Just then the great wooden latch was noisily raised, the door opened and Doctor Carew appeared. He entered with a loud cherry "Good morning, good man!" and then stood still, staring at the scene before him. Bank notes upon the table, the two women weeping in each other's arms, the man looking at them so confused and excited, puzzled him.

"Holloa!" he cried, "what's the matter here?"

Mrs. Weeldon turned her tear-stained pale face towards him with a wan smile.

"I have betrayed my own secret, doctor dear,—they know I am their Jacky's wife."

"Um," said the doctor, doubtfully, with a touch of scorn in his voice, "I see they are already profiting by the relationship."

Mrs. Weeldon recognized his meaning with a flush of shame, and releasing herself from the fishwife's muscular arms took up and handed to him the letter.

"Read," she said; "it is my husband's handwriting."

"Oho! I can guess the rest. He's now at Waunceton. I saw Sir John yesterday myself, and so did Miss Tregarthen."

"Saw un! saw my sonny, my Jacky!" burst in the old woman, "my son at Waunceton!"

And then she laughed and wept and clapped her hands and cried out in great glee :—

"I knawed he wor to come! I knawed it! I allus said, dearie, as I shud see our Jacky agen. They left at hur, but hur knawed he wor to come. I sed un eud niver sleep if my grave of I didn't see un afore I died, and I wor a troo profit—I wor a troo profit after all!"

It was a moving sight to see this brawny, grey-haired, wildly excited old woman walking rapidly about, twisting her great, coarse check apron all sorts of ways, and making it give a loud flap as she pulled it out after crushing it tightly up into a ball and pressing it to her breast and kissing it as if it were a loving child.

"She's mad," muttered the doctor. "Come, wake up, Jack, and give an eye to your missus. Now, Mrs. Weeldon, the chaise is waiting for you on the top of the cliff. Miss Tregarthen's there. We've heard something about your sister Clara, and the lawyer wants to see you. You had better wish your new-found relatives good-bye. I don't think you're likely to return."

"I shall come back to you soon," she said, kissing her mother-in-law tenderly and warmly pressing the fisherman's great horny hand, "you will never want a true friend if I can be one. Good-bye, good-bye!"

Miss Tregarthen was waiting for her in the low basket chaise with a pair of ponies on the top of the cliff, and the meeting was a most affectionate one.

"We have come to release you from that little whitewashed dungeon, love, and we are going to baffle your cruel persecutor most completely. We are on the track of your sister Clara, the London detective wrote yesterday to say so. When we can prove that the evidence upon which you were confined as a mad woman was false, which with Clara on our side we shall do, your cruel husband's reputation will be at your mercy, his punishment in your hands; and if you wish to end it so, he will be only too glad to accede to any terms you may propose to have the affair settled and hushed up."

"To meet Clara and my mother again! Oh! that will be indeed delightful!"

"And it will not be less delightful, I suppose," said the doctor, smiling, "to combine revenge with love; sweet is revenge, especially to women."

"That was the belief of a poet who treated

a good woman with contempt, and a bad one with cruelty," said Miss Tregarthen.

"Hard upon Byron, eh?" said the doctor, with a laugh, "But you, Guinivere, are not in the position of a judge; you have never suffered wrong, and I hope with all my heart and soul that you never may; but what says Mrs. Weeldon?"

"Give me my real name, doctor, call me Mrs. Jenkins; I am very proud of my husband's family."

The doctor laughs loudly at this as if it were an excellent joke, although the speaker seems quite in earnest, and Guinivere evidently shares her friend's sentiment.

"Oh! very well," he says, "then what do you say, Mrs. Jenkins?"

"That when my husband is at my mercy I will forgive him."

"And go back to him?"

"Never!" exclaims the alderman's wife, emphatically and solemnly.

The doctor laughs again, and cries "Never mind, we'll be revenged upon him somehow; he shan't have his charming wife back again, at any rate."

"I wonder," presently says Dr. Carrow, pulling up and pointing into the rocky bay with his whip, "what's up down there?"

Looking in the direction indicated, the ladies saw men, women and children hurrying along the narrowing pathway leading from the village to the shore, to gather about a little group of men whose loud voices and vigorous actions betrayed the greatest excitement. They were pointing out some object in the water.

"I'm afraid an accident has happened," said the doctor, "will you take the reins, Miss Tregarthen while I hurry back to see if I can render any professional service. It's most likely a child drowned. I wonder such accidents are not more common than they are, seeing how reckless these barbarian mothers and fathers are."

While the doctor was gone Miss Tregarthen told her friend of the alderman's visit to the Manor House, and of the reception she gave him, and the reproaches she made him feel.

They laughed heartily when she described his look of baffled anger, and the mingling of real shame and assumed indignation which his downcast eyes, awkward manner and ill-managed voice betrayed. "The doctor had no more pity for him than I had," said she, "but he will tell you all about his interview himself, for here he comes—none too quickly, I must confess."

The doctor came up to them with a thoughtful troubled look and a pale face. Without uttering a word he got into the vehicle, took the reins, and turned the ponies' heads to return the way they came. They saw at once that there had been an accident, and that it was a serious one.

"Anybody hurt, doctor?"

"Worse, killed!"

"Killed! Who? One of the children?"

"No, a man."

"A man! What is his name?"

Instead of answering, the doctor said in a low voice,

"There is no longer any occasion for seeing the lawyer."

The alderman's wife glanced at him with a startled expression.

"Why not?" asked Guinivere.

Again the doctor did not reply. Instead of doing so he turned to Mrs. Weeldon and very gravely and solemnly said :—

"You told us you would never live with Sir John again, madam."

"I never will," she answered, falteringly.

"No," he echoed, with a strangely tragic significance, "you never will."

She clutched his arm, and with a white face gasped, "Was it him?"

He nodded gloomily, and after a pause and a long steady inquiring glance into her face said—

"They are carrying his body into his

mother's cottage, and there it will be placed strange to say, on the very bed he was born in."

"Sir John! my husband? Is he dead?"

"He is dead."

So they drove silently and sadly back to Tregarthen Manor House.

Old Bess was a true prophet after all; she looked upon her lost son's face before she died.

(To be concluded in our next.)

ORIGIN OF NAMES OF FABRICS.—Many kinds of fabrics possess names, which are used more or less corrupted throughout the world. The origin of these old names are given as follows: Damask is from the City of Damascus; satin from Zaytown, in China; calico from Calcutta; and muslin from Mosul. Buckram derived its name from Bochara; fustian comes from Fostat, a city of the Middle ages, from which the modern Cairo is descended. Taffets and Tabby from a street in Bagdad. Cambic is from Cambrai. Ganze has its name from Gaza; baize from Bajae; Dimity from Damietta and jeans from Jaen. Druggat is derived from a city in Ireland—Drogheda. Duck, from which Tucker Street in Bristol is named, comes from Torque, in Normandy. Diaper is not from D'Ypres, but from the Greek *diasporon* (figured). Velvet, comes from the Italian *velute* (woolly); Latin, *velus*—a hide, or pelt. Shawl is the Sanscrit *salu* (floor); for shawls were first used as carpets and tapestry. Bandanna is from an Indian word, meaning to bind or tie, because they are tied in knots before dyeing. Chintz from the Hindoo word *chett*. Delaine is the French of "wool."

KING KALAHANA OF THE SANDWICH ISLANDS during his recent visit to Europe was much impressed with the poverty of every crowned head in one particular—not a single sovereign owned more than one throne. Moreover he noticed that those thrones extant were very old, very uncomfortable, entirely out of fashion, and so rickety that it was dangerous to sit upon them. So His Majesty intends to teach his fellow potentates how to keep up their dignity, has ordered two brand-new thrones, one for every-day use, the other for high-days and holidays. Instead also of the shabby, antiquated, and shaky old things prized in Europe, King Kalahana's thrones are to be made with every improvement, and so arranged that he can put up his feet when tired.

COUNTRY AIR.—If you go into the country or the sea-side leave all your fashionable dresses at home. If you are more anxious about your flounces than about your lungs, and sit in fine harness upon the pier or under the shade of the trees or on the hillside like a Christmas doll in a case, too elegant to be exposed to the open air, you will return to your home-pier, thinner and less comfortable than you left it. If, on the contrary, you wear shoes you can walk in, a belt you can breathe in, and a useful dress that did not cost a fortune; and walk and climb, and ride and drive—if you can; and bathe, row, and ramble about all day, you will find that country-going pays, and that you will look younger and brighter for it all the year. You can knit crocheted tidies and embroider handkerchief-bags all winter; you cannot climb the hills, and ramble by the waterside, or go a-berrying or fishing, or see Nature at her sweetest in the city. You know that you want to enjoy yourself, and that you would do so often, if it were not for your dress. Well, then, leave "dress" behind you; simply clothe yourself; have your big hat, your loose boots, your flannel and cotton and muslin, and never be afraid of appearances, so that what you are doing is respectable and proper. Half a dozen bright young women at a country hotel or farmhouse may set the fashion if they will, so that all the Ninemymies who came down merely to make pictures of themselves in the grounds will soon be seen climbing the hills to see the views from the summits, or going down into the woods to gather blackberries.

ANOTHER DAY.

The opal sky is flecked with pink and gold,
And in the dewy stillness of the morn
The flowers slow their incense cups unfold
And wait their perfume toward advancing dawn.

While every songster 'mid the fluttering trees
Trills gleefully its morning roundelay,
Which floats upon the gently rustling breeze,
A welcome to the swift-approaching day,
As springing from my couch, with murmured prayer,

I gaze around me, breathe the scented air,
Within my heart a holy rapture swells
That to some glorious deed my soul impels;
And then I murmur, "One more day is come,
And ere its glorious light is gone,
Some deed worth doing shall by me be done!"

The sun has reached the middle of his course—
A golden ship upon a sapphire sea;
The flowers 'neath the sunbeam's ardent force
Drop low their heads; each leaf on every tree

Hangs motionless; the birds are mute and still
Within their leafy bowers; in languorous sleep
Nature exhausted lies,

While dull inaction all my spirit steeps.
And then I murmur, "When the heat of day
Shall into cooler hours pass away,
And ere the sun his lengthened course is run,
That deed worth doing shall by me be done!"

The setting sun sinks lazily to rest
Amid his burnished gold-and-crimson bed,
And on Dame Nature's tender, ample breast
Each tiny flower droops its perfumed head,
Each sleepy bird has sung its vesper chant,
And nestles now safe in its tiny home;
And as the last pale sunbeam's quivering slant

Fades slowly away, from heaven's azure dome

The silvery even star peeps forth, and asks:
"How well hast thou performed those glorious tasks

Thou settest for thyself this fragrant morn?
The morn has changed to noon, and noon to ere has grown,

Another day is gone—
Now night has come;
And thou—what hast thou done?"

K. C.

SWEET INISFAIL.

A ROMANCE.

By the Author of "The Mystery of Killard, &c."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE TELEGRAMS.

When Frederick Manton left the hotel that night he went straight to his lodgings. All his savings for the year, the twenty-five pounds he had got from Isaacs, and the hundred and fifty-five pounds he had won from the unfortunate man O'Gorman, had all been swept away in one disastrous evening. But the most depressing consideration in the whole affair was not so much that he had lost the money as that he was completely and helplessly in Isaacs' hands. What could any man make of such a situation? He had been openly, flagrantly, admittedly cheated by this man, and yet he could seek no redress. If he had lost his money through the dishonest arts of a card-sharper he could have accepted his defeat with a philosophic shrug of the shoulders, and the assurance that if he was such a fool as to play with a cleverer and more dishonest man than himself he deserved to lose. But in this case he had no choice. He had been compelled to play—been forced to give up his money as though it had been honourably won—and that all because the money-lender possessed two criminal secrets in connection with him. Where was this to end? Was he to drag out his life merely as a money-getting machine for the dwarf?

Already this man had got close upon nine hundred pounds of George's money. Five-and-twenty of this had no doubt been lent by Isaac to him, Frederick. When he went to the office in Rook Street first, made known his wants, disclosed his secret, and revealed the nature of the security he had to offer, he had thought it an admirable way of getting the money he stood in want of at George's expense. But it had never occurred to him that Isaacs' would make the use he did of that bill. He thought it would be a very good thing if his brother had to pay this twenty-five pounds, and interest, even exorbitant interest, upon it. But he had never calculated upon this man running the sum up to even a hundred, not to say eight hundred pounds.

With the twenty-five pounds he had borrowed of Isaacs he had not had a stroke of luck; but with his twenty-five pounds savings of the last twelve months and the twenty-five Isaacs had given him, he had succeeded in winning the largest sum which had fallen to his luck since his fortunate days at Kleinburg. This winning of his had got into the papers; Isaacs had seen it there, had come down to Clonmore, determined to plunder him of it, and in addition to it had taken from him all the other money he owed.

What would Isaacs' next move be?

What should his—Frederick Manton's—next move be?

Leave the place. Get away from it somehow. Blot out his records once more. Try France again. Do anything rather than be bullied and robbed by an under-sized, misshapen usurer.

With these thoughts Frederick Manton went to bed; and, being a philosophical criminal who believed in his own luck, notwithstanding all the reverses he had met with, slept soundly until it was time to go to the office next morning.

The business which had brought George Manton from Glenary House to Clonmore that evening was connected with the sale of Fitzgerald's property. By that morning's post O'Grady had received a letter from his bankers in Clonmore saying that the necessary balance for buying the Tobrachny property would be to his credit next day, and that if he wished to have the cash by him, as he had mentioned in his letter, he had better come in himself and draw the money, or send a trustworthy friend for it, as the sum was large to entrust to an ordinary servant.

At the time O'Grady got this letter all the legal formalities for the sale of Fitzgerald's property had been complied with. In order to facilitate matters Fitzgerald had been obliged to run up to Dublin for a few days, and keep himself in communication with Flynn's partner there. Next day everything would be completed; Fitzgerald would return from Dublin, the payment would be made, and the documents handed over at Glenary House. Mrs. O'Grady and her family were still away from home, and the owner of Glenary House had invited Patrick Flynn, who was acting as attorney for both parties, to his house, and had, in addition, asked to dinner a few of his neighbours. Mr. Fail, owing to his age and some arrangements which he was making with regard to his daughter's approaching wedding, found himself unable to attend.

The guests who were expected that day at Glenary House were to arrive at different hours. Two or three were to come for breakfast, two or three for luncheon, three or four for dinner. In the face of this fact, O'Grady had asked George Manton to go into Clonmore, cash the cheque for twelve thousand five hundred pounds, and bring the money back with him to Glenary House in time for dinner.

Nothing was known exactly at Glenary House respecting Fitzgerald's movements for that day, beyond the fact that he was coming back from Dublin, and would dine at Glenary House.

In addition to drawing the money and bringing it to Glenary, O'Grady asked George Manton to telegraph what Fitzgerald's plans

for the day were, so that arrangements might be made accordingly. The night before, when George Manton met Frederick at the foot of the stairs, the two brothers exchanged no words. Each was too full of his own thoughts for speech, and indeed there was nothing left to be said between them. To his mind, George Manton had had his last transaction with regard to his brother. Frederick Manton cared nothing for his brother at that moment. He cared for nothing but his own intolerable injuries at the hands of Isaacs.

Next morning, when Manton had breakfasted, he heard by the merest accident—from a communicative waiter—that Edward Pryce, the telegraph clerk, had spent the previous evening with the gentleman Mr. Isaacs, who occupied the drawing-room.

What could have brought those two again together, George Manton thought. What unholy alliance could these two have been carrying out the evening before! He was sure they had not come together for any good purpose. Nay, he was certain that evil was at the bottom of their meeting. Could it be that they were dead to all sense of honour—even to the honour said to be among thieves—and that they were once more entering a ruinous bill transaction? If this were so, he could have no hope of release; the worst must come, and speedily; for he would recognize no more illegal bill transactions.

Before he had gone to bed the previous night, and after he met Frederick in the hall, he wrote a letter to his wife. It ran as follows:—

"My darling Helen, I am getting tired of being so long away from home. I got your last letter, and was delighted to hear that you and the boy were so well and happy. As I told you in the letter I wrote the day before yesterday, all the business matters connected with the sale of Fitzgerald's property will be concluded to-morrow. Fitzgerald himself is coming back to Clonmore, and I am to bring the money out with me to O'Grady to-morrow. He is a splendid fellow, and most popular here. I don't like the notion of carrying such a sum as twelve thousand five hundred pounds in my pocket along eight miles of a lonely road; but it will be daylight, and nobody will be aware of the fact that I have the cash. By the way, now that I remember, I have forgotten to ask O'Grady how he wants the money. I shall telegraph him in the morning for instructions; taking care, of course, to let no one at the telegraph office be the wiser of what I am telegraphing about.

"It is my intention to start from this for home; for you, darling, and our dear little Freddy, the day after to-morrow, so that I will be with you on the fourth day after to-morrow. I am sure my trip has done me a great deal of good. You may rely upon my never having any thing further to do with bills or with Frederick. On this I am resolved and cannot wait for the wedding, which is not, as I told you, to take place for a fortnight. I am tired now, and will go to bed. Good night, darling Helen, and kiss our boy for your devoted husband, George."

When George Manton left the hotel that morning he posted his letter, and returned to the hotel for a telegraph form. This he filled up as follows:—

"George Manton, Clonmore, Walter O'Grady, Glenary House, Tobrachny. How do you want what I am to bring you by dinner time?"

He could not go to the bank until he got a reply, and he was not likely to have a reply for a few hours. Between this and the arrival of the answer he had but a few trifling things to do, so he resolved to call at the West Gate.

When he reached there he found Mr. Fail full of gaiety and high spirits, and Agnes with a soft light of joyous expectation in her eyes.

"He's to be here," she said, at two o'clock. "He will come and see us, and then he is going on to Mr. O'Grady's."

"Do you know what his intention is with regard to after dinner?" asked Manton.

"No," she said, "I do not."

"You are going to meet him?" asked Manton.

She nodded and smiled.

"Well," said he, "Mr. O'Grady wishes to know if he will stay at Glenary House to-night. And as it is more than likely that I may not be able to go meet him, will you ask him to telegraph from the station, what his plans are?"

She promised to do as she was asked and after a stay of half-an-hour or so; George Manton returned to the hotel.

It was now twelve o'clock, but no message had yet come from Glenary. Manton resolved to wait indoors until the telegram arrived. It was ten minutes to two when the yellow envelope was handed to him. The banks in Clonmore closed at three o'clock. The moment he read the telegram his face fell.

"Walter O'Grady, Glenary House. To George Manton, South Tipperary Hotel, Clonmore. Bring the money in hundred pound notes—will be one hundred and twenty-five notes."

"The very thing," Manton said, "I wished to avoid. If he had only said hundreds I should have understood. Now, any one would know who saw this, and knew I am in town, that I am to receive and carry to Glenary this evening twelve thousand five hundred pounds in hundred pound notes. But I suppose I shall have Fitzgerald with me for company, so the matter will be all right. What a strange thing that I should carry this money from Clonmore to Glenary in my pocket, while on the other side of the car will sit Fitzgerald, whose property it will be before dark. How would it be if he robbed me, and threw me into the Slate Quarries? Supposing it was never found out that he did the job? I daresay O'Grady would lose all the money, and Fitzgerald would have to look for another customer, or keep his property."

"How would it be if I robbed Fitzgerald, or rather O'Grady? Suppose I pushed him into the quarry and belted with the money? They would take some time to know which to suspect, or where to look for either. It's an awful lot of money to have about one."

He went to the bank, where he was already known, presented the cheque, and when he was asked how he would have the money, showed O'Grady's telegram. He counted the notes after the teller. The amount was correct—one hundred and twenty-five hundred-pound notes. He placed the money in his pocket-book, and then put the pocket-book in the inside breast-pocket of his coat.

The teller had not taken the numbers of the notes. They were all ones, and had been in circulation long before.

As he came down the bank steps he noticed that his pocket-book made a most unsightly bulge in his coat. The few people he met in walking from the bank to the hotel could not, he thought, help remarking the bulge, and those who had seen where he came from could hardly help guessing what caused the lump. By way of making his coat look less remarkable he opened it in front. For a few paces he thought this was better, but then with every backward movement of the coat his eye caught the distended pocket-book in his pocket. It looked terribly insecure, terribly conspicuous. He buttoned his coat again hastily, and felt very miserable as he ascended the steps of the hotel once more.

It was now three o'clock. A messenger awaited him from the railway, with a note from Fitzgerald. He opened it and read:—

"My dear Manton,—

"I write you a line from the telegraph office to thank you for all the trouble you have taken about me, and to enclose you a copy of the telegram I have just sent on to O'Grady. I am going straight from this to the West Gate. Call for me there on a car at five o'clock. Till then adieu.

"A. F."

The copy of the telegram enclosed was:—

"I intend keeping a car waiting under the Slate Quarries until after dinner, as I have

promised some one here to show her the money to-night."

"Great Heavens!" cried Manton, trembling. "This telegram is worse than O'Grady's."

END OF PART I. THE INHERITANCE.

PART II.

THE PRICE OF THE INHERITANCE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNING OF THE STORM.

At the time appointed George Manton drove up to the West Gate. He went in for a few minutes, saw Mr. Fail and Agnes, shook hands with his old friend Fitzgerald, and then saying there was little time to spare, hurried the departure.

Fitzgerald had left his gloves in the dining-room, and when George Manton was on the car, and Fitzgerald's portmanteau was in the well, and Mr. Fail and Agnes standing on the doorstep to wave God speed, he turned back and said, "I have forgotten my gloves, I have left them in the dining-room; Agnes, did you see them? Come, help me to find them."

Fitzgerald and Agnes disappeared into the drawing-room. As they did so George Manton nodded his head knowingly at the old man, and the old man nodded his head and smiled pleasantly, and said, "Boys and girls will be boys and girls—God bless them." The first clause of this speech was general, and took in the two sections of mankind referred to; the benison was particular and referred to the "boy" and "girl" who had disappeared.

When the two young people were in the dining-room, Fitzgerald turned round, took her in his arms and said, "It was only to say good-bye to you, Agnes. Good-bye, Agnes, Good-bye, my love."

"And you'll be back with us to-night?" she whispered.

"Yes," he said. "I'll come back to my own Agnes when I get the money. I'll bring it back myself, here, in this pocket. And you shall take out the money and count it, and then we'll ask your father to roll it up, and put it into the barrel of a telescope or something of that kind, and to lend me the telescope that I may take it back with me to the hotel. Then the money will be as safe as in any bank, for who would think of finding twelve thousand five hundred pounds in the barrel of a telescope. Good-bye, now, love. When you hear my car coming up the street you will open the door that I may see you from as far off as possible. Won't you darling?"

"Yes, love," she whispered. "Now go."

The two left the dining-room and passed into the hall. When Fitzgerald stood once more on the flagged way, the old man looked slyly at the hands of the former. "Not found the gloves, Michael?"

Fitzgerald laughed. "No, sir."

"Wait a minute," said the old man. He disappeared into the dining-room, and returned holding the gloves in his hand. "Why I recollected distinctly seeing them on the side-board, and you could not remember where they were, and neither of you could find them, although they were there as plain as a pike-staff. I am afraid two heads are not always better than one." The old man smiled and shook his head, and all the others smiled for company, and Fitzgerald took the gloves and jumped up on the car, and told the driver to go on.

"Stop!" cried the old man in his quavering treble. "You must take umbrellas. You must take umbrellas, I say. There's going to be a thunderstorm. Look!"

All, including the driver, turned their faces towards the sky. A vast bank of livid leaden cloud spread all across the eastern heavens.

"What do you think of it?" asked Fitzgerald of the driver.

"'Twill be down on us, sir, before we're at Two Mile Bridge."

"Then," said the old man, "you have neither overcoats nor rugs. Agnes, bring my

mackintosh, and my inverness, and a couple of rugs."

"That will be too much for her," said Fitzgerald. And he ran back to help her.

In a few minutes the rugs, overcoats, and umbrellas had been placed upon the car, the driver whipped up his horse, and the two young men were quickly out of sight.

The driver was right in his calculations. Before they got two miles on their way the sun was darkened, and a few heavy drops fell here and there, the advance-guard of the army of the storm.

Then once more the June sun burst forth from the leaden livid pall above. All the sky now, except a small irregular tract, an island of light in the neighbourhood of the sun, was overwhelmed and drowned by the ocean of impervious cloud. The birds flew low, and out short their chirpings; the cattle and sheep were gathered under the trees, not a breath of wind blew, not a leaf stirred, no dog barked, no ass brayed, no sheep bleated, no cow lowed; the only sound the travellers heard was the dull beat of the horse's hoofs as they sank into the deep yellow dust of the road, and the faint complaining of the wheels as, now and then they grated against stones concealed in the thick carpet of dust.

The hills to the right stood out sharp and clear and wan. Houses and individual trees could now be seen upon them where of old only blurred masses of white and green had been visible.

Away to the left, Slieve-Namoon stood up against the clearly-defined rigid sky. The sky line of the mountain was hard and dry, the higher heather slopes of the hill had lost the misty blue which lent them distance and dignity, and now wore the close, familiar, dun and brown of their local colour. The walls around the plantations on the lower slopes were clear as the lines of a cathedral in moonlight; the fields of corn and meadow land and pasture that lay on the sloping lap of that monster hill of the plain were no longer blurred with a violet haze, but stood out, each patch, field by field, clearly lined by their respective dykes.

To those who knew the mountain well—and both the travellers knew it well by this time—there was something awful in this tearing away of the veil, this naked exhibition of the features of the hill-god in the plain.

The hills on the right seemed drawing near, the great hill on the left lay clearly revealed, as though it had moved more than half way across the plain, out of the remote solitude in which it had stood, to meet its fellows on the right. The vast mass of forest foliage ahead was clear and distinct, as though in the immediate foreground. The trees seemed huddled together in their upward parts, their branches, their boughs, their leaves; while below they looked deserted, isolated, afeared. All in under the trees among the shrubs was cold and thin, and chill and clear, as though the kindly spirit in accord with man, which dwelt there usually, had withdrawn itself from the place, and left nothing but the bare, stark, material bones of nature behind.

The heavy drops ceased to fall. The sun, now low in the west, darted for a moment the full white light of its level beams along the plain, among the trunks of the trees, across the green bases of the hills. But the tops of the hills were left alone for light in the dreary leaden vault of cloud. But all the forefront of the forest foliage blazed up into one universal sheet of fierce white flame, where the light was flung upon the polished surface of the forward-leaning leaves, and broken into incandescent spray among the water drops pendulous from the myriad points of the motionless leaves.

Then all the light was shut out, except the dull, blue-cold twilight that seemed to reach upward from the immediate earth to the near clouds.

Suddenly a swift, intolerable spasm of light possessed the plains, the hills, the woods. A

terrific explosion shook all the air, the hills, the plains, the woods. The horse stood still. "God between us and all harm," said the driver. "There's the storm. Put on your coats, gentlemen. The gates of heaven will be opened now. We must get shelter for a while."

CHAPTER II.

THE STORM BREAKS.

AFTER the first great flash of lightning, and the crash and peal of thunder attendant upon it, the driver whipped up his horse, and saying that there was shelter at a forge about a mile ahead, kept steadily on. The horse was not loth to go, and the driver was not loth to drive him, and in a very few minutes—that is to say, before the great burst of water had fallen out of the clouds above—they had reached the forge, by the side of which stood a large broad shed, under which the horse and cart might shelter secure from the rain, while in the forge, the driver and the two passengers shook the wet off their clothes and dried themselves in the glowing heat the smith had raised in honour of their entrance.

He was, after the usual manner of smiths, a man of few words, but in whose words there dwelt the weight of the metal with which he worked.

"The storm, Creagh," said Fitzgerald, "and a storm which I think we shall not easily shake off." Creagh was the smith, who stood bare-armed by the forge. "What do you think?"

"It is not for me to say, sir," said Creagh, "when you have so good a man as Tim Gaffney to tell you about the weather. But, sir, if I was left to myself, I'd say we were not going to see the end of this till daylight. What do you think, Gaffney?"

The driver thus apostrophized put his head upon one side, looked out of the smithy door, and said, "Not a minute sooner."

"That's a blue look out for us," said Fitzgerald. "Whoever comes, we must be at Glenary House at seven."

Bang! Another broad flash of pale white lightning. Another terrible crash of thunder, and, at the same moment, the rain shot out of the heavens as though it had but one object—that of exterminating all living things on earth. When the prodigious clash was over, and the first fierce bewildering tumult of the rain, Fitzgerald looked at his watch.

"A quarter to six," he said, "and we must be there by seven to dress. Although O'Grady's family is away, he is one of the old school, and likes men to dress for dinner. Otherwise I should not have bothered bringing a portmanteau with me for the few hours I shall be at Glenary House."

"Well, then, sir," said Creagh, the smith, "if you want to get there by that time, and have to make any stops for shelter by the way, as I think most likely you must, just wait till this shower is over and then go on again."

Gaffney approved of this proposal, and Fitzgerald accepted the advice. Accordingly, the horse and car were once more brought out, and although it was raining heavily at the moment, Fitzgerald, George Manton, and the driver got on the car and drove on.

Shortly after they left Creagh's forge the heavy shadow of the great trees closed round them, and they found themselves in a road avenue. There were woods at either side. They could not see more than forty yards to the right or to the left. The road was comparatively straight, and five hundred yards behind and five hundred yards before they could see the irregular dust path, ploughed up by the few drops which had fallen straight from the clouds to the road, and by the tiny cataracts of water which had been gathered on the leaves and flung in confluent masses on the dusty way.

"I do not like this at all," said Manton, breaking silence.

"Nor do I," said Fitzgerald, with a shiver.

"The worst is to come yet, gentlemen. We

can't see what the clouds are doing now, but I know there's something awful going on above. We must make the best of it while it does not rain."

With these words he urged on the horse by whip and speech, and the brute, as uneasy as any of those on the car, responded willingly.

But they had not got many hundred yards when once more the forlorn shafts of the trees sprang clearly in view. All round the travellers vibrated with a spasm of light, and before they had time to lift their eyes to the opaque curtain of leaves which blotted out the impenetrable livid heaven above, the terrific clash shook the air, the leaves, the shafts of the trees, the solid earth, and once more the horse stood still.

"I don't know where to shelter here," said Gaffney, "except under a tree."

"No, no," said Fitzgerald, "that is the most dangerous place of all. Keep on, in the name of God, if the horse will go. We must be at Glenary House at about seven."

"Very well, sir," said Gaffney. "If the horse will go, I'll go on."

The driver got down and patted the horse's neck, and soothed him and rubbed his forehead; and the beast showed all the gentleness of this gentlest of beasts, that is of great use to man. "He'll go on, sir," said Gaffney, "but I'm afraid he'll stop at every peal."

"We must do the best we can," said Fitzgerald. "If you get us to the foot of the slate quarries before seven I'll give you a pound note. As you know, Manton, we can get from the foot of the slate quarries in ten minutes, and then there will be twenty minutes to dress."

From that point to the foot of the slate quarries they were over and over again brought to a standstill by the horse, which would not move forward an inch for a few minutes after each flash and peal.

At last, when it was just time for Gaffney to win his sovereign, and at a time when there was a lull in the storm, the car drew up under the slate quarries, close by the precipitous path leading to Glenary House.

The two young men jumped down, threw off their overcoats, pulled the portmanteau out of the well of the car, into which they thrust the rugs, coats, and umbrellas. Fitzgerald paid the driver more than liberally, even including the pound, and wishing him better weather home than they had out, told him to make the best haste he could home.

"But do you not want him," said Manton, "to drive you back again to Clonmore after dinner?"

"No," said Fitzgerald, "I have engaged Jimmy Dwyer to come for me, and wait for me under the path at half-past nine, to-night." Then he said to Gaffney, "You have had enough of the storm for the present. Here's a flask; swallow what's in it. You're wet through, and if you meet Dwyer tell him not to fail. The evening is bad, I know, but there is a sovereign, or may be two for him, if it is worse."

There was now a lull in the storm, and Fitzgerald and George Manton took to the steep zigzag path that ascended by the edge of the slate quarries. The rain had washed the pathway clean of dust, and the stones and gravel crunched beneath their feet as they ascended.

The leaves on either side of them were heavily laden with rain, and as they brushed them, large drops fell pattering to the ground. The silence was now profound. The vivid clearness had departed from the hills and wooded slopes. The sun did not shine, but there was an increase of light. The whole heavens were now covered with one unbroken sheet of cloud. The two walked on in Indian file, Fitzgerald leading the way. When he came to the bare point, overhanging the chasm in whose depths lay the glassy, grey, green water, he turned around and waited for Manton, who was a few paces behind, to come up.

"I suppose," said he, "if you were in my

place you would not like to come down this way through the dark of a night like this, with twelve thousand five hundred pounds in your pocket, and drive eight miles home, with the money upon you?"

Manton came up and rested a moment before speaking, then he said:

"If you were not a very intimate friend of mine, Fitzgerald, I should not care to come up this place with you in daylight, carrying twelve thousand five hundred pounds in my pocket, here."

He placed his hand on the bulge caused by the money.

Fitzgerald looked curiously at him for a moment.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"That I have got here a hundred and twenty-five one-hundred-pound notes, which are to be yours in less than an hour."

"Eh!" exclaimed Fitzgerald. "Have you got the money?"

"Yes," answered Manton. "O'Grady asked me to get the cheque cashed for him, and I've got the notes in my pocket. When I was leaving the bank I wondered how it would be if you robbed me of them and threw me into the quarries, then went on to O'Grady and pretended you knew nothing of me. The bank did not take the numbers of the notes, no one would suspect you of robbing me, and if you only took the trouble to tie a stone like that there,"—pointing to a large limestone boulder lying at hand, "round my neck with your pocket-handkerchief and my own, it is very likely that nothing further would ever be heard of my unlucky self."

"Come on," said Fitzgerald, "the place is wicked enough of itself, without haunting it with such infernal thoughts."

(To be continued.)

TO THE WORLD GUILTY.

CHAPTER XVI.

PLAYING A PART.

"THERE, Hyacinth, how do I look? Tell me frankly."

It was the night of the dance in Grosvenor-street, and Gwendolen stood before her young cousin in a ball-dress the choice of which had been due to Hyacinth's artistic taste. Gwendolen had never looked more lovely than she did to-night in the cream-hued satin, with crimson trimmings, and the damask rose in her fair hair; there was a flush on her cheek, a proud sparkle in her eyes that added to the effect of her appearance. Certainly no eye could fail to rest with pleasure on the finely proportioned figure and beautiful countenance. Hyacinth surveyed her cousin with smiling admiration.

"That will do," said she. "You look lovely, Gwendolen; nothing is lacking. How many hearts are you going to transfix with your arrows?"

"One at least," said Gwendolen, laughing a little.

"You are generalizing."

"No, I am not. Far from it. I was thinking of Herbert Hazlemere."

"But you have known him before, Gwendolen."

"Very slightly. I shall improve the acquaintance. Peste!" said she, stamping her foot, with one of those sudden gusts of passion to which Hyacinth had become accustomed. "I am nearly thirty. How much longer am I to give the world ground for saying that I am breaking my heart for Errol Cameron? And he, too—do you suppose he does not imagine himself to be still the supreme object of my thoughts?"

"Would you marry one man, Gwendolen, to prove to the world that you were not in love with another?"

"How you talk! You have such an epigrammatic way of putting things, Hyacinth; and

you delight in stripping a proposition of every bit of—what shall I say? Ornament."

"I think ornament only encumbers principle," said Hyacinth, a little drily. "I don't care about calling something ugly by a pretty name. I would rather go boldly at a wrong, and do it without subterfuge—sinning with a high hand."

"Wrong?—sinning! You think it wrong, of course, to marry without love; but how many marriages are made for love?"

"I spoke of principle, Gwennie, and you answer me by quoting practice. But I am sure you are not just to yourself. You used not to think as you are speaking now."

"No; that was when I was as old as you. I have had a bitter experience. I have learned how 'love' can prove itself as worthless as self-interest. Now I must look to money—position."

She had never been blind to these advantages, Hyacinth knew. She only said:

"Well, I am not your father-confessor, Gwennie, and so I don't want to play mentor. Whatever you think you look charming—and that admits of no dispute."

"Thanks partly to you, Hyacinth. Shant you feel very dismal alone here, dear?"

"No, I am never at a loss for something to do."

"Ah! you read so much. Well, don't sit up till the small hours, Hyacinth." Gwendolen smiled, kissed her cousin affectionately, and swept away to the ball-room, and Hyacinth, although she did not show it, shrank from the caress. She knew that either Louis or Miss Philippa, or perhaps both, had repeated to Gwendolen something of what had passed relative to Lochisla, and that Gwendolen, though she had as yet said nothing to her cousin, felt the more kindly to her in proportion as she believed the Earl to have lost in her esteem.

The girl sat down and covered her face when she was alone, but she comforted herself by writing to Lochisla, and perhaps if Gwendolen could have seen that letters she would not have felt so hopeful concerning Hyacinth's changing sentiments towards the Ulster Colonel.

For Gwendolen had by no means relinquished hope; though, as we have seen, her desire to win Lord Lochisla to her feet had in it nothing of love, but was a blending of the wish to triumph over him—over the world that had seen her wronged, and a longing to possess wealth and status; for as a wife Gwendolen would be still young, as a maiden, she was becoming *passée*, not because she looked so, but because everyone knew that she was close to the fatal three tens, and her brilliant and beautiful cousin would certainly cast her hopelessly into the shade.

Yet Gwendolen eagerly sought from another what Lochisla had denied her.

If she could not conquer him she would show him how little she cared to do so. She would yet shine in the *beau monde*; she would let that world know that she had still power to win love—that the woman Errol Cameron had scorned could be happy, honoured, worshipped, without his aid, despite the brand he had put upon her. He had refused her prayer to her face; she had humbled herself to him, and he had spurned her; to that second insult he had added yet a third in coming to London—re-entering society, braving her—braving all; challenging the verdict that he had anticipated eleven years ago; did it not therefore behove her to give scorn for scorn—to pick up the gauntlet Lochisla had thrown down and fling it in his face?

She had every reason to be satisfied with her success that night. She was certainly the most handsome woman in the room, and Herbert Hazlemere as certainly seemed to think so. He spoke, it is true, of Hyacinth and said how much he had been struck by her beauty and grace; but Hyacinth was not present, and Gwendolen was, and did her best to make herself agreeable to her guest.

"Shall we see you at Mrs. Dalton's *soirée*

next Monday?" asked Gwendolen of the young man, as they sat together resting after a waltz.

"I am sorry to say no, Miss Stanhope. I am engaged to Lady Loring for that evening—a *soirée musicale*."

"Indeed! One meets very nice people there—celebrities, too, real celebrities. Will there be any present on Monday?"

"Yes, I believe so—at least, I have been told so," returned Hazlemere, colouring and floundering.

Gwendolen came coolly to his rescue.

"Lord Lochisla?" she said, fanning herself leisurely. "He is the sensation of the hour."

"I am told he will be there," returned Hazlemere, too well bred to show any surprise at his companion's manner, and conscious, too, that her indifference to her old lover was pleasing to him.

"He is so accomplished a musician," Gwendolen continued, "that Lady Loring's music parties would just suit him. She has such terribly learned people! and then, she used to know Lord Lochisla."

"So I was told. Your cousin, I suppose, Miss Stanhope, will be present at the next Drawing-room?"

"We hardly know at present. Hyacinth does not wish to go into dancing company just yet, for it is scarcely two months ago that her father died. I don't think she cared overmuch for him; he seems to have been a cold sort of man; but something is due to respect."

Hazlemere could only assent to this, and the conversation passed naturally from Hyacinth to other things; but when the young man left that night it was with a feeling of wonder that Errol Cameron could have deserted a woman so attractive as Gwendolen Stanhope.

Gwendolen had sent her maid to bed before the evening was over, but on retiring to her room she heard a gentle knock at the door, and Hyacinth's slim dark-robed figure came quietly in.

"Hyacinth!" exclaimed her cousin, surprised. "You ought to have been in bed hours ago!"

"I? oh, no, it does not matter how late I am. Let me help you, will you? and tell me about the dance."

"About Hazlemere, I suppose you mean," said Gwendolen, as her cousin's deft fingers began operating on sundry laces and clasps.

"Partly—not entirely. You like him?"

"Very much; I do indeed. He is such a nice fellow. Thanks, Hyacinth, how good you are to help me; and he certainly liked the society of your humble servant—danced with me as often as he could, and talked to me far more than he need have done merely because I was his hostess. Besides one can always tell when an impression has been made."

Hyacinth laughed, but said nothing, and turned aside to lay on the toilette some jewels she had removed.

"Hazlemere," continued Gwendolen, "spoke of Lochisla—that is, I first spoke of him; Hazlemere, of course, would not have commenced. Lochisla is to be at a music party at Lady Loring's, where Hazlemere would meet him. Her *soirées musicales* are a treat to people like you, Hyacinth. Should you go if you were asked?"

"I will wait till I am asked, Gwennie," returned the girl, stepping back to her cousin's side. "This sash next?"

"Yes, please. Well, but you might be asked, Hyacinth. Lady Loring knows the Austrian Ambassador and his wife very well. They are often at her house, and you know them, too."

"Why, yes. I have sate on the Count L.—'s knee many a time when I was in short frocks, and he used to give me *bon bons*. But are they in London?"

"Arrived yesterday morning from Ems. You, who are a walking newspaper, ignorant of this fact! I declare I shall tell Louis. But my question, Hyacinth?"

"Ah, dear! have I not answered it?"

"By an evasion."

"Then I would go."

"Hyacinth, you are a strange girl."

"I suppose I am."

A pause. Hyacinth began putting away some of her cousin's jewels. Gwendolen stood looking at her.

"You know what I mean," she said at length; "but you always will make people show their hand first."

"A wise way, isn't it? What do you mean, Gwennie?"

"Why, I should have thought that you would rather not meet Lord Lochisla; that is all."

Rather not meet him, when at the mere vague idea her heart had leaped within her!—when she longed to hear his voice; to feel the clasp of his hand! Yet she said calmly, but bending her head over the task which seemed to occupy more time than was needed—

"I must meet him. Whatever I may think of—she seemed to falter; and as if with an effort went on hurriedly, "his presence in the London world, I must meet him; and I cannot seem to avoid him. I have no wish—the colour that rose to her cheek now was natural enough as she raised her head haughtily—"to have my name bandied about, and made a theme for tea-table gossip; that Lochisla is my lover; forsooth! and that I have discarded him on discovering the baseness of the metal hidden to me hitherto by so much gilding. Why should the world believe a lie? But friendship has a medium course. As one who owes gratitude, who, if condemning, yet feels—must feel some affection, I am more free. There must needs be a certain reserve in a friendship between a man of Lochisla's age and a girl of mine. He dare not, whatever he may feel, overtly challenge such reserve. He has no right to ask for more—no right to seek to measure the extent of an affection that is a friend's affection only. Do you understand me, Gwennie?"

"Yes," said Gwendolen, slowly—and there was that lurking look of triumph in her eyes that Hyacinth had seen before; and yet had Gwendolen understood? Had she perceived that the question, "Why should the world believe a lie?" might have applied to either of the two propositions that preceded it, though she (Gwendolen) had assumed it to apply to the first. Had she observed that Hyacinth had afterwards spoken of things in the abstract, putting a case, but not really giving it a personal illustration? No, Gwendolen did not understand, though she believed that she did—believed that she had in the explanation of a difficult position the keynote to much she afterwards observed. It seemed to her now beyond a doubt, that whatever likelihood there might have been of Hyacinth's childish love for Errol Cameron developing into a deeper and stronger love, he himself had effectually prevented such a consummation. Hyacinth had struggled against the bitter conviction that Lochisla, with all his brilliant qualities, was beyond the reach of reverence and esteem; but he had forced her to see the vanity of the struggle; and the fact that he must know how the last step he had taken would lower him in Hyacinth's eyes was almost a proof to Gwendolen that he did not love the girl. What man would wilfully, or recklessly, make the woman he loved despise him?

So Gwendolen smiled in her heart while she uttered words of sympathy; nor were the words altogether false. She could love Hyacinth while she believed that Errol Cameron was not her lover.

"Yes," she repeated, slowly, "I understand you, Hyacinth, I will not say any more."

"Thanks, Gwendolen—that would be the kindest thing you could do."

And Gwendolen took her cousin's hand, and kissed her forehead.

"Hyacinth, may I repeat what you have just said to Louis?"

"If you like—indeed—I would rather you did. Good-night, Gwennie!"

"Good-night, dear."

And Hyacinth went out quietly—went to her own room, and then knelt down, and covering

her face, burst into tears. It was so hard—this part that she must play; but he knew best for whose sake she acted, in whose hands this haughty self-reliant spirit was as wax in the hands of the moulder.

CHAPTER XVII.

"IT CAN NEVER BE."

"My dear," said Lady Loring, meeting in the park the handsome Countess L——, the wife of the Austrian Ambassador, "do you know who is in London?"

"Count Cameron," said the Ambaressa, using the title by which the Earl of Lochisla was best known in Germany.

"It is not him I mean—someone whose name is connected with his."

"Ah! Hyacinth Vernon."

"The same; and now, Eugénie, do me a great favour; bring her with you to my soirée."

"With all the pleasure in life—if she will come. I will go to-morrow, and call on her and convey to her your invitation. *Ma chère*, what says rumour, that the Herr Count is her lover?"

"Rumour is nonplussed just now—does not know what to say; but what think you of him? Is it not strange his being in London after all these years of absence; and Miss Stanhope here also?"

The countess shrugged her shoulders.

"But he is so handsome, and withal, on my word, so fascinating. One cannot remember that one ought to think all sorts of dreadful things of him."

"So I found, Eugénie. Well, well, perhaps we shall know the truth some day; but I should never be surprised if Lochisla came out of the affair better than we have—seemingly—any right to expect. Adieu; and mind our belle, the Hyacinth."

"You want to serve a double purpose, dear," said the countess to herself, as her carriage drove on; "you want to find out if you can if Emma's chances are barred by Miss Vernon. Bah! as if Cameron would give Emma Loring a second thought, though that exquisite Vernon had never been born."

The next day the Countess L—— called on Hyacinth, and asked if she might fetch her for Lady Loring's music party, and Hyacinth consented to go.

When Lochisla entered Lady Loring's rooms, he found himself no stranger among her guests. Two or three amateurs hastened to greet him, and among the professional musicians there were few he did not know. Mrs. Sandon, the "beauty," was present, and came forward to renew her former acquaintance with the handsome Earl of Lochisla.

"So delighted to see you, Lord Lochisla. Mamma says I ought not to be here. I don't care for your grand music, and all that; but I would come when I heard you were to be here; and I want to see Miss Vernon, too."

"You honour me highly, Mrs. Sandon; and I am sure Miss Vernon will be delighted to hear that so distinguished a lady was desirous to see her."

"Distinguished! Not in this company, certainly. Why, Count, I am a misnomer among pikes. I am not even an appreciative listener."

While Helen prattled on the door opened, and the Earl heard the names of their Excellencies Count and Countess L—— and Miss Hyacinth Vernon announced.

There was a crowding and buzzing at the lower end of the *salon*, and then Lady Loring came with her new guest towards where Lochisla stood, every eye following the graceful form of "our Hyacinth," who was simply but richly attired in white satin and lace, with pearls and diamonds for her ornaments.

Lochisla turned as she came up, and she gave him her hand with a smile on her lips, and in the depths of the blue eyes that drooped a little, and light as was his clasp, a quiver went through her that he felt in the tremor of the hand he held for a moment and raised

to his lips before he dropped it, as he said, in French,—

"The pleasure of seeing you, Miss Vernon, is one more among the many I anticipated to-night."

As Hyacinth passed onwards, Lady Loring whispered to the Countess L——:

"Eugénie, the girl is divine! What charm, what perfect grace! Look at her now! Nobody else will be of any consequence to-night."

Another guest entered just as a celebrated pianist sat down to play. Lochisla saw Lady Loring greet with considerable cordiality a young and good-looking man, and, turning to someone who stood near, he asked who it was.

"Mr. Hazlemere," was the answer; "he has a splendid place in Gloucestershire, and is a great 'catch.' I met him for the first time the other night at the—at the Stanhopes' dance."

"I like his face," said the Earl, not even seeming aware of his informant's momentary hesitation, and his keen gaze rested with more interest than an ordinary stranger would elicit on the countenance of young Hazlemere, and with those words he turned away, and took a seat where he could best hear the music.

"When this piece is over," whispered Lady Loring to Hazlemere, "I will introduce you to Lord Lochisla. There he is yonder; and there is Miss Vernon."

"Ah! yes, I saw her in the park."

Hazlemere was very fond of music, but his attention during the playing of that piece was divided between Errol Cameron and Hyacinth.

Hazlemere's heart throbbed indignantly as he saw the homage paid to this man who had wrecked a woman's life, and yet could bear himself with proud ease among his compeers. Could time obliterate a wrong once wrought? True, brave and noble deeds may soften the harshness of even so terrible a breach of the laws of honour as Lochisla had committed; but a sin sinned, a wrong done, can only be blotted out by atonement or reparation; and how had Errol Cameron made atonement or reparation? Not by winning battles in the council and on the field—not by mercy to his enemies, and a chivalrous deference to woman, that in time of war suffered not a soldier's rude jest addressed to a woman to go unpunished; and yet Hazlemere was anxious to know this Earl of Lochisla, and as he watched him, his interest in the famous leader deepened more and more. He was vexed with himself, for he could not be unconscious of the feeling he condemned, and its thought was proved by the conviction, forced on him, that if even now Errol Cameron were to set himself to win back the woman he had scorned and abandoned, he could do it; and Hazlemere did not try to hide from himself a sense of relief that there was little likelihood of the Earl making any such effort.

So lost was the young man in his own reflections that he did not notice the cessation of the piano, and started when he felt the light tap of a fan. He rose hastily.

"Lady Loring, I beg your pardon."

"Granted, my dear sir. I want to introduce you to Lochisla."

She took his arm and led him up to the Earl. The magic words were spoken and bows exchanged, and Herbert Hazlemere had his wish, the rash wish, expressed a few months ago at the club.

Henceforth he could rank the Earl of Lochisla among his acquaintances. The two men entered into conversation. Lochisla was anxious for his own reasons to know more of Hazlemere, and with the skill which his unconscious fascination of voice and manner aided, he drew out his companion, who found himself quite unable to maintain any coldness of demeanour, and was even vexed afterwards to recollect how he had almost forgotten that the Earl had forfeited the esteem of men of honour.

Hyacinth, meanwhile, was in the midst of a ring of gentlemen, when Emma Loring came up with Hazlemere, to introduce him, and

then Lady Loring put in an appearance, and asked Lord Alfred Fitzalan—who would much rather have talked to Hyacinth—to play.

Where was Lochisla? he had vanished with Mrs. Sandon, and Hyacinth, where she sat, could just see him within the conservatory, bending over the pretty lady's chair, smiling, paying her courtly deference with manner and words half grave, half light, and the girl knew how the man's proud soul was chafing. Yet he was here for her sake! Why, why was it?

But Hyacinth was asked to play, and this brought the Earl back to the *salon*.

He had expected much and he was not disappointed, but in the buzz of congratulations his were not heard. She did not wish to hear them. Not so would his thanks be expressed, his praise bestowed. Extricating herself from the group that surrounded her Hyacinth turned to Lochisla, to meet a smile and softly spoken, "Thanks—a thousand thanks," and that was all—here—with so many eyes to see and ears to hear. Then he added: "Will you not come through the conservatories during the interval?"

Up to now they had not exchanged a dozen words from the moment Hyacinth had entered the room. Certainly as unlike lovers as possible! Hyacinth took the Earl's arm and they sauntered slowly towards the conservatory.

But not till they had passed beyond the *salon*, and were among the shrubs and flowers, out of sight and hearing, did Lochisla's manner change, and face and voice express all he felt.

"Hyacinth," he said, bending down to her, and his mellow voice trembled, "how can I thank you for the delight you have given to me? I had not dared to hope so much,—aye, heart's dearest," as the blue eyes were lifted with a quick flash of joy, and the rose flush on her cheek deepened to crimson, "you know I would not praise because I love you; but I could not wish more than I heard to-night, and it was a favourite of mine you played, too, as you knew."

"You make me so happy," said the girl, with tears in her eyes and quivering lips—"so happy, that I almost forget the pain of seeming to wrong you, Errol."

"My darling! your perfect faith reproaches me. I ask all trust and give no confidence. No, no," he saw the change in her face at once, "I would not wound you, my child. So! tell me, something has passed concerning your presence here to-night?"

"Yes, Errol. I told you, you know, when I wrote what Louis and Aunt Philippa said; but it was Gwendolen. She asked me whether I did not shrink from meeting you."

"And you answered—"

Hyacinth repeated her own explanation of her feelings and the line of conduct she thought it well to observe. As he listened an involuntary smile quivered on the Earl's handsome mouth.

"Hyacinth," said he, "you are a born diplomatist; faith, no minister plenipotentiary ever entrenched his position better, or better conveyed one meaning while really expressing another. And now—forgive me—for any moment we may be interrupted. Has Gwendolen made any impression on Hazlemere?"

The question was asked carelessly, yet its form at once struck Hyacinth's quick mind. It seemed to assume some power of giving a positive answer one way or the other, although Cameron knew she had not been present at the dance in Grosvenor-street.

The girl coloured, and answered,—

"I did not see them together, as you know, Count Errol."

"Diplomatising with me, sweetheart?" He bent down to look into the drooping face, and smiled with a touch of amusement. "But those blue eyes, my Hyacinth, can read face, manner. Do you think that Errol Cameron asks a betrayal of confidence?"

"Errol!"

"Forgive me, most sensitive of mortals. Well, then, you will not answer me?"

"So much I will answer, Errol, as I can,



[A FAIRFUL INTRODUCTION.]

and that is only to say that I think Hazlemere has been attracted by Gwendolen; and I hope it is so, and you hope so too? You would wish to see her happy?"

"Have I not said so? Have you any doubts that you put the case as a question?"

"No doubts of the wish, Errol, but of the form of its fulfilment. You did not ask about Hazlemere as if you would be pleased to think that my answer might be affirmative."

The Earl bit his lip and was silent for a moment.

"Heart's dearest," he then said, "I can withhold the truth from you, but I cannot—even by a look or a tone—suggest a lie; and to deceive you would break my heart! Do I not wrong you enough already? Hyacinth, spare me a question I may not answer. Ask me no more concerning this matter. I would give—Mother of God, you knew it!—how much to see Gwendolen happy, but—" He paused, and added almost in a whisper, and Hyacinth saw that his lips were bloodless, "it can never be!"

Those words filled the girl's heart with wonderment. What could they mean? The question would arise. Surely they implied something more than the impediment of shameful birth, and reached beyond any special group of circumstances. Was there—the thought flashed for the first time into her brain unbidden—the shadow of some fearful crime, that might at any time come to light, hanging over Stanhope Lea? Was Francis Stanhope after all living—a proscribed criminal? And was Lochisla—the holder of that terrible secret—to be the Nemesis of Gwendolen's life? Was it for this he had come to London? To work out for her unseen—unsuspected—a cruel destiny; dooming her to suffer for a sin of which she was guiltless, nay, more, of which she was ignorant?

So quick is thought, that it was only a few moments before the girl looked up and said, softly,—

"I should not have spoken. Count Errol, I was wrong—"

"Not wrong, dear one—not wrong. You are never that, Hyacinth, to me. You must never say it, or think it."

The tears rose to her eyes for the pain in his voice, and she said wisely,—

"My words I can govern, Errol, but not my thoughts; yet I will try."

"I know it, my child. I wonder," he looked down on her, as they stood still for a moment near a plashing fountain, with that sweet grave smile in eye and lips, "I wonder what there is that I should ask of you, Hyacinth, that would not elicit, in whatever form it was cast, the willingness to do, or try to do?"

"Why, nothing," the girl answered, simply.

"How could there be, Count Errol?"

The Earl stooped and kissed her hand, tenderly and reverently.

"Come," he said then, gently, "come back to the *salon*; we must not be long absent."

At the entrance of the conservatory they met Lady Loring with Hazlemere.

"It is you I want, Lord Lochisla," she said, "you must favour us, please. I cannot allow you to escape."

"I shall be very happy," said the Earl, bowing, and he resigned Hyacinth to Hazlemere, and followed his hostess to the piano.

But it was Lochisla who, later in the evening, threw Hyacinth's lace mantle round her shoulders when she was leaving, and as he did so, he said:

"Mrs. Sandon has asked me to her garden party next week. If she should ask you, will you come?"

"I should like to so much, Count Errol, but without Gwendolen? She may think it unkind."

"I wish," said Lochisla, "that you had other friends to live with. Your position in that house is a difficult one to maintain."

"But it would be so strange to leave them without any ostensible reason," said Hyacinth, "and then, living alone, a girl is so circumscribed. A companion is not like relatives."

"No, my child; still that does not alter the truth, does it? But as for this garden-party, you must do as you like."

"Mrs. Sandon may not ask me."

"It will be very strange if she does not, Hyacinth. You are to be the 'success' of this season, and Helen Sandon likes successes."

Hyacinth smiled.

"Then, Count Errol,"—as she took his arm to go out to the carriage, "if she asks me I will go."

"Not against your own feelings, Hyacinth."

"No; I was only in momentary doubt; but of course there must be division. Gwendolen would not go—would not be asked where she would meet you; but I am not—cannot be bound to identify myself with her."

They reached the carriage, and Lochisla handed her in, bade good-night to her and the Ambassador and his wife, and turned back.

"Hazlemere will be there," he said, inwardly.

"*Bien!* He too must suffer. He will recover the blow; after all it is best kindness, though he knows it not—may never know it."

But when he was quite alone that night he covered his face and groaned aloud.

"Oh, Blessed Mother, why must I play this cruel part? Why must I stab the wounded—trample on the slain? What have I done that on me should be laid the black curse of ever wearing the mask of shame and dishonour?"

(To be continued.)

Most persons know what they hate, few what they love.

A HAPPINESS that is quite undisturbed becomes tiresome; we must have ups and downs; the difficulties which are mingled with love awaken passion and increase pleasure.

EVERY increase of knowledge may possibly render depravity more depraved, as well as it may increase the strength of virtue. It is in itself only power, and its value depends on its application.



["YOU TOLD ME ONCE YOU LOVED ME—DO YOU LOVE ME NOW?"]

NOVELETTE.]

"IN DOUBT OF HERSELF."

CHAPTER I.

"AND what are you going to wear to-night, my love?"

The person addressed had just sauntered into a small luxuriously appointed drawing-room, and any one hearing the question and looking at this girl (for she seemed scarcely more than seventeen) would have thought at once that it really mattered very little what she wore, since silks and velvets and jewels could not very much enhance her beauty. To-day she wore a grey dress slashed about with crimson, simply made, but yet worn so gracefully, following every line of the lissom figure, that one could not imagine anything suiting her better. She had one of those faces we call witching—a little delicate looking, but all the more taking from that very fact; such bright eyes, such a perfectly tinted skin, such splendid wealth of rippling brown hair, such long thick lashes, and a mouth at once sweet and arch. Other girls, pretty by themselves, looked inanimate and dull beside this brilliant vivacious beauty, as yet in her first season, as yet dancing through existence like a child, with as innocent a pleasure in notice and admiration and spolling, and with as little conception of her own power.

She glanced half carelessly in the tall mirror as she passed to the table where her mother was writing—glanced with an almost imperceptible toss of the prettily poised head, as much as to say, "What does it matter? I shall show up the dress, the dress can't help me." She said, pausing,—

"I don't know. Why?"

"You must look your best," said Lady Dare.

"It will be a very grand affair. You must not wear anything you have been seen in before."

"Why, mamma, you know I have the dress for Mrs. Wyndham's ball, that never came off. I thought you remembered that, or you would have wanted me to have a new dress."

"Ah, yes, true—white satin, isn't it? I must look at it. You promised Lady Madenham you would go, didn't you?"

"Her own self, none other. I wonder who is to be there. I hope somebody besides our own set. I am so tired of them."

"My dear Lucia! to hear you talk in that way of one of the best houses in town, where the best people go. You are a most lucky girl for the marchioness to be so fond of you. You are constantly there, and I am especially glad to see you such a favourite at Madenham House."

A half smile, a slight colour on the girl's face—but the mother did not hear a quick sigh.

"You are seventeen," said Lady Dare, settling herself for a maternal chat, "and therefore old enough to understand our position exactly. I have told you before that we are really poor. I don't see how I can live in this style many years, and it is impossible to retrench without losing our place in society. It is for you, my love, to build up our fortunes—thank your good fairy that she bestowed on you such beauty. I can see, and no doubt you can, that Lord Arbuthnot is attracted by you; his family never did care for wealth, his mother herself was the daughter of a poor peer. They say they have wealth enough themselves, and they have not of late generations made rich alliances. You are a sensible girl, and see as well as I do the importance in every way of an alliance such as this would be. Young, good-looking, of good reputation, clever, there isn't any one in society to whom I would sooner see you engaged."

"And rich, mamma," said the girl, with a curl of the lip, "and, oh! a future marquis! Don't leave that out!"

"I hope they have some weight with you," said Lady Dare, catching a sarcasm in the

tone that rather alarmed her. "I don't imagine you would care to marry a poor man. Poverty means ostracism—living in a small house, having few servants, looking at pounds before you spend them, wearing the same dresses—"

"Perhaps turning them," said Lucia, holding up her hands in horror. The picture did really look appalling to her, who had grown to believe that the loss of one accessory to luxury would make her wretched. "Don't go on, mamma. I should never do anything so silly as the love-in-a-cottage business—vegetating on nothing a year. Fancy me!"

"I am very glad to hear you speak so. I have sometimes been afraid you were getting a little romantic. Of course love is all very right, but it is not everything. So you will understand my wishes, my dear child. All the girls are dying to secure Arbuthnot, and I must say really run after him. Your own pride and delicacy will prevent your doing that, and indeed he is just the sort of young man to see through it."

Lucia was not wounded by such talk as this. She had heard it all her life—known in the nursery that she was expected to win a coronet at the very least. And she had no desire herself to go any lower. She was worldly because her bringing up had been worldly, but she was not consciously so, though enough like the majority of modern young ladies of fashion to be proud, and not a little vain of attracting a man like Wilbraham Arbuthnot, who might have had his pick from a dozen noble houses, but with a rebellious spirit somewhere that would speak at times.

"I shall never be so silly as to marry a poor man," said the girl, "and if I did I should have to make a runaway affair of it, for you'd never consent; and as he couldn't afford a brougham, and to run away in a cab would be worse than suicide, it's not to be thought of. But it's a horrid bore. Why must we all be married?"

"My dear child, with your beauty and gifts

you could do so much with money at your disposal—lead society, have a *salon* like the French ladies of rank, be the queen of our world. Don't despise position and power," said Helen Dare, glad to see these words had brought to the girl's face a proud sparkle.

"Despise power!" she said, "no indeed, there is little enough field for ambition left to women in our class, but we can wield an immense, widespread power. One wouldn't want love then."

Lady Dane neither denied or confirmed this last sage remark. She was not so satisfied that the possession of power could fill the heart as to be able truthfully to confirm it, and on the other hand she did not want to disturb the girl's belief in the idea. Once the affianced bride of Lord Arbuthnot and her own pride would prevent her from drawing back—indeed such a thing would be the talk of every drawing-room and club, from which the bravest must shrink.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE BALL.

THE great saloons at Madenham House looked dazzling that night. It was just after Easter, and town was full, so that most of the invited guests put in an appearance. The marchioness never crowded her rooms: they were very large, and held comfortably a considerable number of people; but this absence of crush, when it was not inevitable to spoil an expensive and charming toilette, and there was space to display it, was perhaps one reason why people were so eager to get cards for Madenham House. This early summer night countless mirrors multiplied again and again the fairy-like scene and the noble proportions of the saloons—a whole suite ending in a large conservatory. There were flowers everywhere, from the hall to the conservatory; the air was heavy with perfume, and the brilliant light shed over the whole scene brought out all those vivid hues that seem impossible to get except in the "stars of earth."

Beauties were there of all degrees of pretension, but none shone with such rich beauty as Lucia Dare, presented just before the recess, and already acknowledged incomparable. The men raved about her, only holding their tongues in presence of the dispossessed beauties, who, after trying to disparage the new aspirant's charms in vain, fell back on ominous silence, that might mean a great deal and not look so ungenerous as adverse comments. Of course the grand *parti* of the season, the heir to the Madenham marquise, was quite given up—it was no good wasting time over the pursuit. This peerless girl had but to smile on him and he would, of course, be her slave.

"Now, my dear," said the marchioness—she had been something of a *belle* herself once—as she greeted the Dares, "don't get your programme quite filled, keep some dances free."

Lucia smiled a little, she understood what the speech meant, but it was not quite certain it was for Lord Arbuthnot she intended to keep all those dances. She was quickly carried off, and the two elder ladies sat down to rest and look at the dancers.

Lady Dare asked after the marquis.

"Not very well to-night," said the hostess, with a shade on her handsome face, "he is too much of an invalid; I am afraid he will not appear at all. I think Alban must have gone up to see him because I told him to come early and I have not seen him yet."

"Alban?"

"Oh, I forgot—Captain Leigh; do you know him?"

"His name, from my girl; she has met him often, but I did not know his Christian name. I have not had the pleasure of meeting him."

"I am sure you will like him. He is like a son to me, and a dear brother to Arbuthnot. They are inseparable—I believe my boy is never happier than with him—how he existed all the time Alban was in Afghanistan I don't know. He has not been long at home."

"Isn't he called 'Afghan Leigh'?" asked Helen. "I have heard that nick-name, but was not aware he owned it."

"Yes, that is the same; he was all through those campaigns, except the last one, I think; but dear me," said the Marchioness, laughing, "you can never get him to talk much about his own experiences."

"Is he very young?"

"About thirty. He and Arbuthnot were at Eton together—what they call chums. Alban had no nearer relation than the Dean of Westminster, and you may imagine his house was not very cheerful for a ricketty high-spirited school-boy, so he used to spend his holidays with Arbuthnot. I was delighted—my boy is so good-natured. He is a little easily led, and Alban's influence was the very thing for him. I cannot tell you what he has been to him; somehow he always put me in mind of the ideal knight of old—no doubt with the knightly blood he inherits some of the qualities. But here he is."

She stretched out her hand to the newcomer with a bright look of welcome. "My dear Alban, better late than never," she said. "Let me present you to my friend. Captain Leigh—Lady Dare."

Lady and gentleman both bowed, and the latter took the seat the Marchioness offered him. Helen's quick and practised eye had already taken in a great deal of the personal appearance of "Afghan Leigh," and it pleased her artistic as well as her feminine eye. Lucia had said he was "very handsome," and so he was, and not in an ordinary style either. Helen thought at once of the Marchioness' comparison to the knights of elder days.

In the dark grey eyes, very bright and clear, there was something of that sleeping power seen in the portraits of eminent men of the olden times. The chestnut hair, of course worn rather short, left plainly visible the noble setting of the head, an indispensable attribute of beauty; but those same locks had their revenge against regulation length, being so thick and wavy that they could not have been made by any possibility to present the appearance afforded by the modern young man of fashion. They curled most picturesquely over a very broad forehead and straight dark brows. Wilbraham Arbuthnot was wont to say, laughing, that those curly locks were not all the work of kind nature—an accusation which hardly needed a denial—the face of their owner being sufficient denial in itself. Some soldiers are apt to be foppish, but this one would have scorned such effeminacy, and only laughed at Wilbraham's fun.

"Where have you been, my dear boy?" asked the Marchioness. "I told you to come early, and you promised, and this is how you keep it—you, a Leigh—shame!"

"Don't they say women are never just?" said the young man, with a mischievous look that lighted up what was habitually rather a grave expression. "I never believed it until now. Do you always condemn people unheard, dear Lady Madenham; and when I have been performing a work of mercy?"

"Have you been to see Madenham? I told Lady Dare I was sure you had."

"I hope you found him better, Captain Leigh," said the lady.

"Yes; but he is not coming down; says it would knock him up. Where is Will?" asked Leigh, turning to the hostess, "here, of course."

"There he is," said Helen Dare, pointing with her fan to the other side of the room, "he has just left my daughter, and is coming this way."

If Arbuthnot thought Afghan Leigh "the best fellow out," it did not seem that the latter was much behindhand in his opinion of the future marquis—at least if his greeting of him was an indication of his feelings.

They only shook hands of course, but there is more than one way of performing that everyday salutation. The two hands did not part at once; they lingered as it were in the close clasp; and an adept in hands might have learned a good deal of the two men by that

hand-shake without looking at the faces. Wilbraham's, white and delicate, did not look as if it had ever worked, and seemed to cling to the one, strong and supple and bronzed, which closed round it rather than lay in it—the hand that one could fancy ready for anything and disdaining nothing—with more energy in it than Wilbraham's; and when the eye travelled to the faces the first impression was confirmed. Alban's very smile was enough; his was the stronger, the protecting spirit, Wilbraham the one who looked up and depended. But the bright young face was not a weak one—the eyes had that clear direct gaze that never belongs to a weak nature—the lips did not part helplessly in the smile; a fund of strength there was somewhere, ready for use in days less free from care than these. But the young heir had been leaped in luxury, petted and spoiled from the cradle, and there was none of the valuable hardening discipline that brings out energy. Helen Dare scanned both the young men, and came to very much the same opinion as the invisible observer.

"Danced yet, Alban?" said Arbuthnot, after he had saluted Lady Dare. "No? how long have you been in the room? not long, I know."

"How do you know?" asked his mother.

"Alban says he hasn't danced; such a thing couldn't happen if he'd been half-an-hour here, trust him."

Helen asked Leigh, laughingly, "Are you so fond of dancing then? You young men always are, I suppose."

"I must plead guilty, Lady Dare, but you so graciously include me with a good part of my sex that it makes me feel less wicked. I am afraid Arbuthnot has revealed a weak point, and as there is no Scotch elder here I am not fearful of acknowledging it."

"You need not be to me."

"Thanks, I began to think you considered me one of those abhorrent beings who is above a weakness. Are they not generally a good deal like cast iron?"

"No weaknesses and no softness?" said she, "No, Captain Leigh, I don't do you that injustice, you look as if you'd be iron against a foe, something more malleable when the foe was down."

"Thanks, so much," he said, "I'll retract what I said about feminine want of justice after that kind opinion."

"It's a true estimate, Lady Dare," put in Arbuthnot. "Ta-ta, there's the band, and I can't miss this dance of all the dances."

He went off with an alert step; involuntarily the eyes of the three left followed him, saw him pause beside the beauty of the season, and then lead her away—even at that distance they could see he was glad and proud. The two ladies glanced at each other. Alban Leigh's dark eyes drooped for a second, and the lips were closed a little more firmly. No other signs escaped him—no one would have noticed those or if they did have thought his thoughts were with his friend—as they were partly.

"Alban," said Lady Madenham, "don't dance attendance on us here; I'm sure you're longing to be off in that waltz, and there are plenty of charming partners. Besides, I want to speak to Lady Dare."

"And I am *de trop*, a word is enough to the wise," said the young man. "Perhaps you think dancing men have no business to be wall-flowers. And since I am dismissed I have less compunction in deserting you." He bowed slightly, and the next minute he was at the side of pretty Marion Foulbaque. She had not intended to join this waltz and for that reason had sat in such a retired part of the room that a good many men who would have asked her had overlooked her; but the young lady retracted her unspoken determination when Afghan Leigh, the handsomest man and the best waltzer in the rooms, begged the honour. Lucia Dare swept past them as they joined the waltzers, flashed a bright look of greeting at Captain Leigh, whom she saw for the first time that evening, and vanished. She was in a maze of happiness. The gorgeous

colours, the flowers, the dresses, the thousand lights, the delicious music, the floating movement as if shrouded on air, all contributed to that feeling of intoxication. And Lord Arbuthnot was whispering all sorts of pretty nothings—that were not “nothings” to him—nor to her at the time. The girl was dazzled, fascinated—the colour that came and went, the smile half-shy, wholly sweet, the eyes half-lifted and quickly dropping—they were not the arts of a coquette. She had used no arts at all to bring Wilbraham Arbuthnot to her feet, and her pride and girlish triumph were so far innocent; she knew it was in her power to win that coronet her mother coveted, and she thought it a good thing that this man, with his handsome looks and his noble heart, should care for her—should have passed by a hundred others and singled her out. She was flattered by his deference, the almost reverential air with which he listened to all she said—seeming to hang on her lightest word—as if she were some being extraordinarily above him. She had not felt the need yet of herself looking up. And then he was Alban Leigh’s chosen friend, and she felt what all women felt towards the young officer—and men too for the matter of that—an instinctive reliance on his judgment of men, a feeling that what he loved must be worthy of love.

The waltz was over and the dancers wandered into the conservatories, where the fountains were plashing with a cool musical sound into the great marble basins, and the scent of flowers came in wafts on the fresh air. It was all dreamland to the girl of seventeen in her first season. She did not want to talk—only to listen to her own fancies, and to look through those avenues of glorious flowers at a brilliant picture somewhere not so far off.

“Will you sit down—you are tired,” said Wilbraham, seeing she was silent, and imagining no other cause for it but fatigue. She did not deny the assertion, though she felt as if she would never be tired again, and they sat down. The murmur of voices—the light laughter, came borne to them from the ball-rooms, and nearer still in the conservatory; but Lucia hardly heard it till a mellow voice said, almost behind them:

“Here they are, Miss Fonblanque,” and then she gave a quick start. The second after she was standing, and her hand was in Alban Leigh’s. What a radiant face she lifted to his! “Miss Fonblanque was bent on finding you,” he said, “and I saw you and Arbuthnot come here—it is like fairyland, isn’t it?”

Her lips parted in such a happy smile—the quick smile that shows another’s thought has exactly met our own; it was her only answer—an answer which sent a sharp throb to his heart. Then she turned to Marion, and they all chatted together till a footman came up to Lord Arbuthnot with a message that “my lady begged him to come to her for a minute.” Wilbraham rose—not very cheerfully. Filial duty was a duty just then, and a duty without an atom of yielding.

“Miss Dare, may I leave you for a few minutes?—Alban, will you take my place?”

“Don’t let me keep you,” said the girl.

“Captain Leigh will take care of both of us.”

“I’ll relieve him of part of the charge,” said Marion. “My lord, as you are going to the ball-room, will you take me to mamma? I promised to join her after this waltz, and I have transgressed already.”

“With the greatest pleasure,” said Wilbraham, his brow clearing; “my part of duty has some flowers, the sweeter for being unexpected.”

“What a pretty speech!” said Lucia, laughing; and Marion blushed a little as she took Arbuthnot’s arm. Captain Leigh began talking to his young companion—not ball-room talk—that was not his way, and was one of the reasons why he was such a favourite with women. His manner was entirely different from Wilbraham’s; through all its chivalrous respect there was a touch of the indulgence of a man who has seen a good deal of life, and for whom life has held more hard work and

peril than pleasure; but it was also easy to see that he was accustomed to command, and to hold his own. There was not that waiting on his views and words that pleased Lucia in Arbuthnot, who waived a contrary opinion in all honesty; he must be wrong. But Captain Leigh was more apt to prove her reasons for her opinion, and had not the least compunction in exposing a fallacy and making her see it. It was done so kindly, so gently, that most women he knew said they preferred him to differ from them for the pleasure of being set right by him; but Lucia just now loved the insidious flattery of entire submission. It seemed pleasanter to have it implied she was peerless in all things and to feel the superior. Yet she enjoyed her brief rest though Wilbraham did not come back. The talk was so charming; it interested her, in spite of her feeling, as she always did with him, very young and lacking in knowledge. She said frankly, after a pause,—

“I thought you were called a fire-eater, Captain Leigh?”

“I believe I am, but what then?” he answered, laughing, “your tone implies some doubt. I confine that propensity to an enemy.”

“Oh, I didn’t imagine you kept it for society only.”

She hesitated.

“May I know the ‘only?’” asked Alban, meeting her eyes with a half-amused look.

“I daresay I am very rude,” said she, all her hesitation melting; “but you know so much and have seen so much, and yet you are so gentle to our ignorances.”

“You honour me, Miss Dare, but wrong yourself by using the plural.”

“No, I don’t. Do you feel very savage when you are fighting?”

“I really don’t know. I never thought how I felt. You evidently think I am double-natured, or do you kindly doubt the savagery?”

“Would it be a kindness? I think I should feel awfully savage if I were fighting. I expect you didn’t get your sobriquet for nothing,” said the girl, smiling.

“Some people were talking to Lord Arbuthnot the other night about you, and I wanted to know how you had got it, and he wouldn’t tell me.” She was girlishly malicious enough to enjoy the sight of the quick colour her remark called up. He opened his lips to say something, but she stopped him. “Don’t interrupt me, please, I haven’t finished. He referred me to you.”

“Oh, you mustn’t believe all Will says of me,” said Alban. “I am sure I am not going to keep you here with talking a lot of nonsense.”

“Captain Leigh,” with a pretty mock air of insulted dignity, “what do you mean by implying that I like to hear nonsense?”

“I humbly crave pardon, but the band is tuning, and who could dare to detain you”—a slight stress on the pronoun—“of course you will be claimed.”

“No,” she began, when Alban exclaimed, rising,—

“No! May I claim you then?”

She had risen too, and stood now with her head a little on one side, looking at him half quizzically.

“I hope you are not double dealing, Captain Leigh?” was all she said, while the band was tuning, and Alban looked absolutely impatient.

“You are cruel, Miss Dare. I had thought all you could give me would be when the evening was half over, and now I am happy enough to find you free you keep me in suspense. Of course I am anything you say I am—if you will be gracious this once.”

“On one condition. Will you answer all my questions whenever I choose to ask them?” She looked as mischievous as a child, and as innocent.

“You are too good to care to ask them. I am in your hands.”

“Very well. I shall hold you to that,” and she put her hand on his arm. But there was no further opportunity for talk that night. After that one dance they did not meet again till she was going, and then he encountered

her in the hall, going hurriedly after her mother, who had already descended to the carriage on Wilbraham’s arm. Lucia’s white mantle was over her arm, and the chilly morning air blew in through the wide open door. It was so unusual a thing for the popular beauty to be unattended that Alban felt surprised, but stopped her to say,—

“I thought you had gone, Miss Dare. Will you accept my escort?”

“Oh, thanks. I couldn’t find my cloak, and I am afraid of missing mamma.”

He took the mantle from her, smiling a little.

“There is not much use in finding it unless you use it, is there? The air is chill,” he said, putting it about her.

“Oh, never mind it,” said the girl, vexed, but somehow not venturing to disobey. “You Indians are always so terribly prudent.”

“And young ladies very imprudent,” Wilbraham would have begged pardon and yielded. Captain Leigh, with a quiet retort, wrapped the mantle about the girl’s throat, but so gently, so protectingly, that her vexation vanished.

“How good you are,” she said, looking up penitently. “But I’ll have revenge for being made to obey.”

“I am afraid that threat hasn’t much effect,” said the young man, leading her down to the carriage. “Good night.”

The carriage drove off, and Alban linked his arm in Wilbraham’s as they turned back to the house.

“Alban,” said the young lord, “you’re a lucky dog. I envied you just now.”

“Don’t grudge a ray of sunlight to us outsiders,” said the other, lightly. “Be generous, Will.”

And Arbuthnot looked gay and confident as he went forward into the lighted hall. How little he knew, then, of the innermost heart of the man at his side—his dearest friend!

CHAPTER III.

A FEW mornings after the ball Lord Arbuthnot sauntered into his father’s house, and the Marchioness, coming into the drawing-room dressed for walking, found him reposing listlessly on a *fauteuil*. She scanned him for a minute before he knew she had come in with not a little pride in his handsome form and face, but with more fondness than pride. Then she said, quietly:

“Well, my boy, you look very listless.”

He sprang up. “I beg your pardon, mother; I didn’t see you.” He kissed her with boyish affection, but after that filial salute the cloud returned to his usually bright face.

“It’s no good asking you to come with me,” she said, drawing on a perfectly fitting glove; “because I am going shopping, and you are not so utterly modern as to care for that. What are you going to do with yourself?”

“I don’t know”—a yawn and a stretch.

“Go to the Army and Navy, and see if Alban is there.”

“Ah, that’s not a bad idea. I wonder what in the world I should do without that fellow?”

“He’s the best fellow in existence—too good for a lazy boy like you,” said Lady Madenham; but the kiss she gave the “lazy boy” neutralized the censure. “Well, I must go; you can’t see your father yet, he is not well; but come to luncheon, and he’ll be down.”

Wilbraham presently sallied forth in the direction of the Army and Navy, and was just going to make inquiries about his friend when Leigh came out quickly.

“I saw you from the window, Will,” he said; “were you coming for me?”

“I was obliged to; I felt so miserable. I thought nothing less than a sight of you would restore me.”

“A sight of me?” said Alban, with a wicked intonation that Wilbraham understood, for he coloured a little. “What makes you miserable, *mon cher*? Lost at cards? your horse gone lame?”

“Don’t jest, Alban,” said poor Arbuthnot

taking the other's arm. "Come in the park, unless you have any engagements."

"None at all till the afternoon. I am at your service now as always."

The park was soon reached, and the friends struck across it to the more unfrequented parts. More than once Leigh's dark eyes glanced into Wilbraham's face, but he waited till the budget of miseries should be voluntarily opened, not but what he pretty well knew what was coming; only what he had seen weeks ago—only what he had been expecting—what he knew had come the minute he saw Wilbraham. The latter did not seem inclined to speak, leaning on Alban's arm, with his eyes persistently on the ground. At last Alban said kindly, willing to help him, and perhaps finding the suspense a little too hard to bear longer:

"Well, old fellow, what's up with you? No-body ill, I hope. Your father?"

"He's never very well, the dear old governor. It isn't that."

"Any trouble you've got into? You wouldn't be afraid to tell me—you never were in our schooldays." Alban was a bit hypocritical here—he knew if it had been any scrape Wilbraham would have been out with it directly. His hypocrisy recoiled on himself, for as Arbuthnot shook his head, he grew pale.

"Trouble!" said Arbuthnot, "it may be or it may be not. I shouldn't think it trouble if I were certain."

"But you are not, and so the winsome face still vexes your heart, my lad," said Leigh, softly.

"Hush, you needn't tell me; I knew before you did; I can't be deceived where you are concerned. Why are you afraid?"

"Oh, Alban, she can never care for a worthless fellow like me."

"I think any girl might be proud to have won you, Will. Ask her; you have a right to do that."

They had paused under the trees, and Wilbraham stood looking doubtful, Alban with folded arms, quite powerless for the minute to say more. The winsome face would vex his heart evermore.

"Don't think me a coward," said Arbuthnot in a low voice, "I am not like you, and it seems so presumptuous to dream of her giving me a thought. You remember what Schiller's Max says, 'Thou art so far above me.'"

"Yes; but Max is speaking of worldly position; Thekla might hope to wear a crown. You can give your Thekla more of worldly goods than you receive."

"But the words apply in another sense. I have often envied you when you are talking to her; you seem as if you felt her equal."

Alban drew in a sharp silent breath, and turned his head a little aside; he did not want Wilbraham to see his face just then. Her equal! Why, he could have knelt at her feet and prayed as a suppliant only for hope—not even love!

"While I," Wilbraham went on, "always feel as if she were something out of my reach, immeasurably higher. How can she look below her to love?"

"Below her to you, Wilbraham?" Then—a very sweet smile came into the dark handsome face—he turned to Arbuthnot. "You can but try, dear Will; a brave man does not fear failure, and if it comes it can always be borne."

"Ah, don't judge me by yourself, Alban; you could hear anything, but I tremble at the thought of failure."

"Ask her," repeated Alban, and knew while he spoke that it could make no difference to him whatever Lucia's answer was. So long as Wilbraham loved her his part must be silence. "You know your people would be delighted—you have nothing to fear there."

"And you, Alban—are you not afraid she may draw me from you?"

"She hasn't done that yet, Will, and if she doesn't now she never will. I don't think you are made of such light mould as that—it is only as if you had an elder brother."

"The best elder brother that ever lived," said Arbuthnot, with an earnestness that made

his voice give. "And to all you have done for me you add this—putting some of your brave heart into me. Whatever comes of it you shall be the first to hear it."

"Thanks, Will, but the home people first."

"Nonsense—always putting yourself behind every one else, unless there are black-mouthed cannon before you. If you have nothing much to do this afternoon come for a pull up river—I am terribly restless. You talked of some engagement?"

"Only a business one—I can be with you at four."

They turned back to the thronged streets, and Lord Arbuthnot went to Madenham House to see his father. He parted from his friend gaily, and Leigh went to his rooms, and would not let himself pause for thought. Letters, books, piano, anything to fill up time, to forget his heart-sick longing for rest. But the sacrifice should be whole and entire—this man never did anything by halves. Even in the little matter of the row he had disdained an excuse so easily made; and he stepped into the boat at Richmond later with the smile as ready to his lip as ever, and his talk as full of its charm of fancy and brightness. And then there was the quiet drop down the river under the moon, when the shadows lay deep and still in the limpid water; and his eyes never left the wide landscape before him, and the long steady stroke never quickened or slackened the while he heard mechanically Wilbraham's low chant in time with the oars. What had he lost? Nothing really. He knew neither more nor less than he had known, as he said, weeks ago. He would have had then as fair a chance as Wilbraham—true, he had neither rank nor present wealth, but he would have won both for her sake, and he was proudly conscious that already he had gained some fame. But he had early seen that Wilbraham loved her; and as a matter of course had never shown, by the slightest sign, his own feelings. He had been called a hero, and so he was; if it is heroic to coolly risk life for another; to suffer hardships cheerfully; to bear the anguish of bodily pain without a murmur. But the world never knew of this, the hardest heroism of all—to stand quietly aside and let another take what he might have won, and to love that other not less but more. The soul might shiver and falter, but it did not faint, except in fear that self might gain the mastery, and he should rejoice at his friend's failure.

"What a glorious row," said Wilbraham, as they mounted their horses and rode slowly over the pretty bridge into the High Street, "and you brought us down with such a jolly stroke. Are you glad you came?" Leigh looked into the happy young face—looked till its smile seemed reflected in his own, only too tender to be as bright. There was no burden on him in that moment—there could be none where Wilbraham was concerned.

"Yes, very glad," he answered; and Wilbraham thought he knew what that quiet tone meant. Months after he knew all it meant.

CHAPTER IV.

LADY DARE never gave large parties—her means did not allow of it; but her "At Homes" and select music parties were voted delightful, and her invitations were never refused. It was not likely they would be, whatever the form of entertainment, when the reigning beauty was always present.

Amongst so many noble and wealthy Wilbraham Arbuthnot had really some reason to fear, for he was too wanting in vanity to be aware that he outshone most of them. Lucia was so much alike to all, it would have been difficult for anyone to have guessed a preference for one above the rest; even her mother, keen though she was, was at a loss. She only saw that her girl always looked happy, that she lived her brilliant life with the utter enjoyment of a child, and she was content.

She was wise enough not to overdo her part.

But when she was alone after the ball at Madenham House her reflections were by no means rose-coloured. She had seen the man she had often heard of—Afghan Leigh—and though he very much prepossessed her he vexed her as well. For what earthly reason did he want to be so handsome, so winning? Worse still, to have the very reputation to attract a young impressionable girl?—worst of all, to be so utterly averse from speaking of himself, so honestly refusing, like the famous Guides, to think he had done anything uncommon? He could not be more dangerous.

There were a dozen stories passing from hand to hand of his doings—of his cool bravery, his readiness of resource, his unselfishness, and Lady Dare could not ignore him. He was like another son in the Madenham household, a favoured guest everywhere—to decline cultivating his further acquaintance would be too marked.

"Was ever woman so unfortunately placed?" said the unhappy lady, as if loyal gallant Alban were a ravaging wolf. "He has more attractions even than Arbuthnot—except money and rank. If he had only those I shouldn't care. I believe, after all, my safeguard is in himself. He is just the sort of man to hang back if he thought Arbuthnot cared for her. And I am bound to say I couldn't see the slightest inclination to even pay a little more than the ordinary attentions to Lucia—another good thing. She is fond enough of power to think most of the man who shows himself her slave. I suppose Captain Leigh is well enough off to marry if he chose, and when the Dean of Wilmorton dies he will be wealthy; but the dean may marry—who knows? or leave his property to his tenth cousin. Anyhow, his alliance doesn't approach Wilbraham's, who has just the position to suit Lucia. I would much rather see her doing her London season, then Rome, Nice, yachting, then half over the globe, into all sorts of wild places. Anyhow, I can see better at my party next week. I'll ask him to come. I know he is musical. The disagreeable point is that Lucia has never said much about him."

The dainty note from her ladyship lay amongst a heap of others on Alban Leigh's table a few days after. The hand was strange to him, and he turned it over before he opened it, then when he had read it laid it down thoughtfully. He would like to go very much—too much. Should he be wise? He sat down trying to think, to face the beginning of that course he had determined on. There were a few minutes of half dazed effort to see clearly; then the strong will forced a passage, and he drew writing materials towards him. A brief note of acceptance was written with hand as steady as a rock, and he rose.

"It is only for a time," he thought, ringing for the servant. "Perhaps I can get back to India before very long, and, besides, I have no choice. No one would refuse to be a guest in that house unless his reason were the same as mine. Well, well, there are other worlds beside that of love—work and duty and fame. I can live in those—I must live in those."

Lady Dare's house had not the magnificence of the Madenham mansion, but it had more warmth and pleasantness. Lucia's taste reigned here, and the result was a bijou residence full of fair shapes and harmonising colours—lounges in which one could dream away existence, pictures one could look at for ever, draperies that delighted the eye, books one always wanted to read. It took Alban's fancy the minute he stepped inside it—a fancy so artistic that it could dispense with magnificence, and rely on form and colour; and, besides, it was so homelike.

His reception was warm and friendly enough; he came with credentials, being the friend of the Madenham, so could not be treated at all like a stranger, and nobody in that house ever felt strange more than five minutes.

"I am so glad to see you," said Lady Dare, meeting him at the door of the drawing-room with a cordial clasp. "So kind of you to come

in such good time. I think you will find our music please you, though I have heard you are so very fastidious; but my girl is as bad, and she takes it in charge. I think you know Professor—and Signor—? You do? I expect Lord Arbuthnot soon." All this was not said fussily or even rapidly, but in a leisurely way, while they stood for a few minutes. Alban asked her, while glancing round he gave a nod here, and a smile there:

"I think I have heard you do not entirely rely on a set programme?"

"A few things only; where all are musical—I mean with a classical taste—I like a little latitude. I think some one has just entered, and here is a substitute. Lucia, my love, here is Captain Leigh—will you show him the programme?"

Lucia came up, in a trailing dress of a rich cream-coloured material, cut square at the throat, and the sleeves ending in a fall of lace below the elbow—the very dress to suit her and the rooms she was in. She greeted him in her frank way, with unshrinking eyes and firm clasp. His eyes sank for an instant.

"So you have found your way here," said the girl. "Don't be too severe on us, please. Lord Arbuthnot says you are a terrible critic."

"I am afraid Arbuthnot tells a lot of tales," said Leigh, smiling. "But I think they are moving to the piano."

He led her to the instrument, and then took up a position from whence he could hear to suit his own notions, finally obeying his hostess's silent invitation to take the place beside her on her sofa. He very soon saw he had been right about Lucia. No doubt there was room for improvement; in a few years she would be a still more superb player, but even now was exceptionally fine. And he felt at once what Wilbraham, in all his praise of her playing, had never mentioned—the something passionate, yearning, unsatisfied, that showed depths of which she might be herself unconscious. It was then that his first doubt crossed him as to Wilbraham's real unity with her. He heard nothing but the divine music, and when it ceased still sat motionless with that feeling approaching to pain the music worshipper knows. He had been in a celestial atmosphere, and the earth mists must close round him again. He almost started as a familiar voice exclaimed,—

"He's in the seventh heaven, Lady Dare," and Will's hand was on his shoulder.

"And you bring him to earth with a shock?" said Helen.

"He'd never come down at all if I didn't. Did you know I was here all through the last movement?"

"Of course not. I don't think even you quite appreciate the trio, or you would know I should not have noticed you. Lady Dare, how exquisitely your daughter plays."

It was said so earnestly, so enthusiastically, that both mother and lover looked delighted.

At that minute the young pianiste came up. Wilbraham turned to greet her with a light in his face, and the eyes that had met Alban Leigh's so frankly did not meet his; the faintest colour flushed the transparent skin; the little hand that had been so firm in Leigh's trembled in Arbuthnot's. And Alban saw it all, though as she turned to him he rose with no change from his usual manner, thanking her for her interpretation of the trio.

Later on, in an interval, when most of the guests had gone into another room for tea and refreshments, Lucia was resting on a *fauteuil* in a snug recess at the end of the drawing-room. Lord Arbuthnot was beside her, and a few people who despised the creature comforts were sitting or standing about talking, among them Captain Leigh, but at a little distance. Lucia had been looking rather languid, but suddenly turned to her companion with a mischievous sparkle in her bright eyes:

"Don't you want some tea, or chocolate, my lord?" she said.

"No, thanks, unless I may take you."

"Not now, if at all; I'm a great deal too

comfortable here now all the people are away, and it is so deliciously quiet. But you may do something else for me."

"Anything in the world," exclaimed Wilbraham, eagerly.

She laughed. "How eager you are before you know what I am going to tell you. Go and tell Captain Leigh I want him."

"I may come back?"

"Don't you see this sofa only holds two? Go and talk with Miss Fonblanque. I am going to ask your friend why he is called Afghan Leigh." Wilbraham burst out laughing.

"I'll give you a box of gloves, Miss Dare, if you get anything out of him. Not even I have ever heard it from his lips except in bits that have been dragged out of him."

"Not even you—what conceit!" said Miss Dare, with charming scorn. "I'll make him tell me. Do you know my size? Joubert's, mind, and not less than six buttons."

"Oh I shan't have to get them. I'll send him, but I am not going to talk to Miss Fonblanque. I want to see poor Alban victimised."

He went off, and presently Leigh came up, evidently much amused.

"You honoured me with a command, Miss Dare," said he, pausing before her.

She nodded brightly, and indicated he was to sit down.

"You have a long memory," he said, with a keen look at her as he obeyed. "I am in the Palace of Truth, I suppose."

She folded her hands in her lap very demurely, and glanced up as much as to say "Could there be any doubt of that." Then the dancing eyes flashed a look over her fan at Wilbraham, who was watching them in a high state of delight.

"I hope your memory is as good as mine?" she said; "and, above all, that you remember promises."

"I should never dream of forgetting this one. How can I fulfil it?"

"By telling me how you got your sobriquet and the V.C."

If Captain Leigh had any dislike for his task he did not show it. Probably, for once in the way, his graceful yielding to the inevitable was not all put on. Not that he cared to talk about himself to this girl more than to other people; but even though her interest might be mere caprice, or a girl's pleasure in hearing of brave deeds, it was very welcome.

Nevertheless his account was so sketchy that she very soon took it out of his hands, and the reason for his nickname was easily understood when she got out of him that he had been in the war from the beginning—in the thick of everything—and, moreover, having previously travelled in the country, knew it by heart. She gathered, too, though he was unconscious he had shown it, what place he held in the love and respect of all about him.

The nickname was a sort of expression of their pride in him and affection. She had seen that when he was mentioned before other men who had known him—seen it by the brightening eye and pleased look.

"But the war is not over yet," she said, as he paused.

"And you wonder why I am idling here," said Leigh, with an instant change of face which did not escape her.

"No," she answered, gently. "I did not wonder."

"What then?"

He looked up quickly.

"I was sure there was no room for wonder. You would only be here if you were left no choice."

He was silent an instant. The wild thought—fleeting as it had been—that she misjudged him had been such anguish that the relief left him at first no words in which to thank her. Then he said, in a low voice:—

"I cannot thank you for trusting me, but you are right. I got wounded severely, and they could not get me beyond a certain point—

they never could, they said, unless I came home—so home I was sent."

He seemed to brace himself up before he added:—

"And the worst of it is the doctors forbid my going back, though there is nothing on earth the matter with me; but they say India and active service just now would undo everything."

"I am so sorry," said the sweet voice, and the dark soft eyes repeated the same thing, only more eloquently. He met them for one brief second with an involuntary smile and a sharp throb of pain. Oh, if he had never come home, died there, anything—anything but this! What though his pain were lightened by her words, what though her pity could not wound, there was the sting; he had no right to be able to say all this to her alone among all the women he knew—no right to be afraid to meet her eyes.

"Now tell me about the V.C.," said Lucia, after a minute or two.

"Oh! that was one night Major Alison and two of our men and myself missed the rest after a skirmish. We knew where they were and were trying to get back to them. I was acting as guide because I knew the country, and ahead of the others. Then I heard Alison shout, 'Look out, Leigh,' and there were a lot of Afghans all round them, as if they had sprung from the sides of the hill path we were on."

"Between you and the others?" said Lucia, in breathless interest.

"Yes, between us—"

"And you? you cut your way through them?"

"It was the only thing to be done; I was here and they were there, and they had to be helped."

"Were you wounded then, or in the skirmish?"

"Both, only a slight thing in the skirmish. I got through them: back to Alison."

"Through all that number? You could have escaped if you had liked, couldn't you?"

"Why, yes, but of course—"

"Ah! don't misunderstand me, you would not have escaped, you would have died first," said the girl, with tears in her eyes. "And in getting back you were wounded; wasn't it terrible work to fight your way through that number?"

"It was pretty hard work," answered Leigh, with a coolness that was almost amusing in contrast with her eagerness, "but we kept up till help came, and the enemy were dispersing."

"But that isn't all. You saved somebody. Colonel Vane was talking the other night, and I heard him say that—was it Major Alison?"

"To tell you the truth, Miss Dare, I have no very clear recollection of that. I remember seeing a fellow rush up to Alison and flinging myself in front of him. I got hit instead of him, and that was the last I can recall. The next thing I remember was waking up and Alison was by me."

"And you saved him?"

"Yes," was the brief answer.

"Ah!" said the girl, under her breath, "what would suffering seem after that! How I envy you!"

Then for the first time Leigh's quiet manner changed; the colour flushed into his cheek, the light to his eye, as he answered with generous warmth:

"Alison was such a splendid fellow it was an honour to do the smallest thing for him. There wasn't one of us didn't love him—we couldn't have lost him. I was proud when he thanked me. I think I forgot pain and everything else. He was in a terrible way when I was ordered home, and I did not seem to care so much as I should if it had been for anyone but him. And then he was so kind—he made it bearable. If I saved his life Heaven knows he repaid it. I believe it was more than half his doing that I got back to life again."

There was an abrupt break in his voice, and he stopped. The girl understood him, and did not offer to interrupt the silence. When she

thought she might venture it was to say very earnestly:

"And for that day's work you won your crosses. Well, if ever soldier deserved it you did."

"And what soldier would not try for it to win such guerdon as you have given me?" said Leigh, as earnestly as she had spoken, with a deep inward joy that startled himself. He added lightly, as if to cover his previous words: "But I must have wearied you—I owe you thanks for hearing me so patiently."

"Oh no, I was so glad to hear it all, and it was so good of you to humour me. You are a very curious contrast though, Captain Leigh."

"Am I? in what way?"

"You were so cool just now," Lucia's voice and manner were so exactly like his own that he laughed. "'Tis too hard work,' 'I got hit instead of him,' that's what you said and the way you said it—then 'Alison was such a splendid fellow,' and you're all on fire in a minute. I began to think you had no enthusiasm."

"I should be so sorry for you to think so badly of me as that, Miss Dare. May I retort and say I begin to think you have no mercy?"

"Certainly, if you like, and besides you are quite right; I ought not to laugh at you when you have been so good. I know you hate being cross-questioned. Here's my hand."

It was on his lips to deny his assertion—to answer impetuously. There was nothing he hated doing that she wished done—words that from other men would mean nothing, but he dared not utter them. Not as he felt them while that little hand was in his—while the burning wish that he might keep it had to be fought down desperately; while he could have kissed it in passionate gratitude for the praise and tears she had given him. The bitter temptation was conquered, and he dropped the hand as he answered—"he was glad to have given her any pleasure," and rose to leave her. Then as he passed into the other room Wilbraham joined her, and Lucia triumphantly claimed her gloves. How little she guessed then what that seemingly harmless but costly—how a man's noble heart writhed at disloyalty to his friend; how, while she dreamed that he was kneeling before her to receive the symbol of valour, he was crying out he was not worthy of that cross she had envied him for gaining, and through the long night strove, and strove in vain, to forget the glistening eyes and the trembling voice!

And when next these two met Lucia was the promised bride of his dearest friend.

CHAPTER V.

ALBAN LEIGH had not been long in, one evening, and had just told his man when he came for orders that he was going to Madenham House about nine, when he heard Arbuthnot's voice below asking if he was in. There was an unmistakable ring of joy in the fresh glad tones that Alban turned pale; and instead of going forward to meet his friend stood quite still, leaning his hand on a table near, and waiting for him. In came the young man, unceremoniously, and clasped Alban's hand in a grasp that made even him almost wince.

"My dear old fellow!" was all Wilbraham said.

And Leigh knew the truth. Very soft were the eyes that looked with such transparent clearness into the other's light face; yet quite at first he could say nothing—only put his other hand on Wilbraham's, so wishing him joy.

"I wanted you to know the first," said Arbuthnot, "it was your doing."

"Dear Will! Heaven keep you both."

He could say that from his heart. He had no other wish just then; was glad in Wilbraham's gladness.

"So you plucked up courage at last," he went on, smiling. "I won't ask if it was so very awful. But it was not my doing."

"Yes, it was that day, you remember in the park. I told Lucia—"

"Told her what?"

"Oh, about your making me courageous, and that she must think no end of you."

"I hope now she will always consider me a friend," said Leigh, quietly.

"She is awfully anxious you shouldn't think my precious self throw away," said Wilbraham, laughing. "Imagine such a thing! Why that is my one fear—that I am not half good enough for her; that I can never make her happy."

"I don't suppose she shares the fear, dear boy."

"She must see I am not up to her; it is only her goodness that overlooks it."

"Nothing more than that, Will?" said Leigh, with a touch of half tender mischief in his manner. "Nay, I am not laughing at you. She will not think she stoops if she loves you. A woman of her stamp does not love intensely where she cannot look up."

The remark was information to Wilbraham, but he took it as Leigh meant he should. Believing thoroughly in Lucia's love for him, he did not trouble himself further at present. He went off into some rhapsodies, to which Alban listened with wonderful patience, with a smile that was a little quizzical now and then, but always so sweet that no one would have minded the quizzing. Then Arbuthnot declared he must come with him—he was going to dine at home to-night, and would listen to no objections.

"I am ashamed to come so often," said Alban, obstinately refusing to go and dress. "I nearly live at your house."

"Good job if you quite did. Mother always calls you her other son," said Arbuthnot, pushing him gently towards the door. Leigh submitted, and left the room. He would fain have had some respite to gather himself together, to call up all his forces, but it was not to be. He was driven on, obliged to trust that strength would come at the needed moment. His mind was in a sort of confusion with Wilbraham's last words always repeating themselves. "Mother always calls you her other son." If he received a mother's love, or something near it, he owed a son's duty; he must not hurt Will's mother, he must not let her see the quiver of an eyelid. In a numb way he thought it would not be so difficult; he felt as if nothing could move him now. He could go back to his friend, face him without fear; but as he reached the door he paused in terror at the sudden trembling that shook him—the sudden failure of strength.

In a passion of anguish he sank into a chair.

"Oh, my God!" broke from him, beyond his power to control, "I cannot bear it! I dare not fail! Honour, faith—oh, to keep those! What is my strength worth to go like this!"

In those few moments he learned, at terrible cost, that repression can only go a certain way—that at some time the will must break down and the heart be the conqueror. The proud man writhed at his own impotence—at his own powerlessness to rally. It seemed to him hours before he could lift his head, and it was in truth only a few minutes; all around and within him had been suspended except that poignant agony, and when he rose it was as if he came back to a life he had left—took it up again when he had laid it down. But some subtle strength had been born of that weakness; he went back to Wilbraham with no change in the sweet grave expression that was the charm of his face.

At dinner he was the life and soul of the little party, filling up gracefully all gaps and deficiencies left by Wilbraham, who could not be supposed to be interested in ordinary topics, and indeed was, for him, very silent. Captain Leigh almost immediately followed Lady Madenham to the drawing-room, leaving Wilbraham with his father.

"Just the person I wanted," said the lady, as he entered. "I must talk to you about it—I am so delighted."

"You ought to be, for Will is as happy as I suppose we mortals can ever be," said Captain

Leigh. "I came up so soon for a chat. Do you know, long ago I used to think Miss Fonblanque was the divinity."

"Long ago—for shame, Alban. What do you mean by that term? Marion is only twenty now."

"She doesn't hear me, so it's no matter. I was inaccurate, though. I mean about a year back."

"I don't think Will noticed her particularly."

"Well, there was a good deal about her in his letters. I really began to think there was something in it, but I suppose all suns paled before this most radiant of all," said Alban.

"Marion is charming, lovable, clever—but not like Lucia," said Lady Madenham. "Of course I should have welcomed her if Wilbraham had chosen her, but I am glad he did not. You know, I suppose, the Dares will be hear to-night; Lucia is to play. Why?" she got up quickly—"can that be them, so early?"

"Miss Dare," said Leigh, quickly, drawing back as a footman opened the door. Lucia came in alone, but stopped half timidly, glancing from one to the other of the two occupants of the room. The Marchioness at once stepped forward, and as she clasped the slight form in her arms all the girl's fears fled. Without a tremor she lifted her young face for the earnest kiss.

"But alone, my love?" said Lady Madenham—"why is that?"

"Mamma was very tired and not quite well," said Lucia; "she sent all sorts of apologies and would not let me stop because I was to play, so I came early to be under your wing."

"My dear child! I cannot have too much of you. But we are forgetting Alban, only he is one of us."

"And not to be treated as a stranger," said Captain Leigh, coming forward, and taking the girl's hand.

"May he, as Wilbraham's old friend, say how glad he is, and wish you both all happiness?"

He was looking down on that winsome beauty and saw the soft cheek flush, and the dark eyes lifted to his with a happy smile—and he forgot that he loved her. Her heart was Wilbraham's, and he was content. Lucia only said a gentle "Thank you," and went and sat by Lady Madenham. Then Lord Arbuthnot came in, and before many minutes were over guests were announced, and there was music and cultivated talk, and Lucia played, and on all sides heard praise of her genius, and was entreated to play again. She sat down without a word, and played a wild thing of Chopin's—a restless passionate appeal, sometimes stormy and almost despairing, sometimes flowing into pathos. Alban Leigh sat apart from the rest and listened, with every note going home to his own heart, breathing his own thoughts. What had made her—the happy betrothed—choose that to-night? Was it just because she was so happy that even this wonderful music could not touch her with pain? He believed so—that was his interpretation of her choice. But Lucia, when Lord Arbuthnot asked her aside why she had played that unhappy thing to-night, answered, "She did not know—did he like it?"

"It is so despairing," was his objection; and then some one else claimed her attention, and no more was said.

The girl laid her head down that night, and thought over the evening. She had been welcomed as a daughter; the kind old Marquis had kissed her, and called her his dear child—his wife had been loving and delighted—Alban Leigh had been glad she was a bride to be proud of. Her mother was pleased, and had told her she had done well, and the girl repeated the same thing to herself. Yes, she ought to be very happy, she said, and made a restless movement, turning aside from the light burning on the table. To-morrow there would be the morning ride—Wilbraham would join her; and visits or picture-seeing or something pleasant and refined would fill up the afternoon. There was a long vista of bright

days before her, and love and beautiful things about her—no clouds, nothing to complain of. She half started up then, and pushed back her hair impatiently—wouldn't it be very calm, very unchanging? always the same—the season in town, then the country in the autumn, or yachting, or going abroad. There was nothing to look forward to.

"You see," said Lord Arbuthnot, at that same moment as he and his friend chatted over their cigars, "we get tired of the same round sometimes, but everything will be new and vivid when she shares it all with me."

"Yes," said Leigh, in the soft way that belonged to him when he was deeply moved, "there is a love that glorifies commonplace things and makes even the daily round something to look forward to."

CHAPTER VI.

LUCIA DARE had begged that her engagement might not be publicly announced—for what reason she could not have explained even to herself, and had no reply to give when her mother remonstrated with her.

Lord Arbuthnot came to her rescue and silenced opposition by saying Lucia's wish was law, and it was to be just as she liked. Nevertheless, the truth leaked out, as it always does. The persons concerned were such prominent members of society, and Lord Arbuthnot, by reason of his wealth and rank, had been so much discussed on this point of marriage, that it was hopeless to try and keep the secret. It was very soon no secret at all. "Which is, after all, the best," said Lady Dare to Marion Fonblanque, who hearing the news from her brother had called to know the truth of it. "It must be known as soon as we begin to make any preparations."

"When will they be married?" asked Marion, with her eyes fixed on the ground.

"I hope soon; Lucia seems inclined to put it off."

Marion was large-hearted enough to congratulate Lucia with real earnestness. Whatever her feelings towards the handsome future marquis she kept them concealed, and did not shrink even when asked to be chief bridesmaid; and she defended Lucia when her mother impugned her motives for this alliance.

"It's a good thing for her," she said. "She will not have a penny."

"Do you mean she doesn't care about Lord Arbuthnot, mamma?" asked her daughter.

"My dear, she will be happy enough. He is fond of her, and they are both young and handsome."

"I am sure you wrong her. I am sure she cares for him," said Marion, warmly.

"I hope I do; but if she is not in love with anyone else, it is the best thing she can do."

"Oh, mamma."

"Well, what is to become of a girl of her position without fortune? If you were poor, you certainly could not have afforded to refuse two good offers in one week, as you did."

"I should have done it though," said Marion, impatiently.

Lady Fonblanque smiled benignly, and a little incredulously.

"Happily, it doesn't matter for you, but it does for Lucia."

Marion did not reply. Her mother's words disturbed her, and she sat thinking them over, the only result being that she noticed Lucia very closely. Nothing seemed gained by it in the way of enlightenment. The girl looked, spoke, and moved as if she had not a care in the world, and, in fact, she had little enough just now. Everybody about her was delighted with her engagement; she herself was perfectly satisfied. She was spoiled, petted, deferred to more than ever a queen; all her world subservient to her, and none more than Wilbraham. To do her justice, she did not use her power capriciously, though she knew now she had it, and appreciated the possession; a month ago she was ignorant of it, and had used it with as little consciousness as a child, or, rather, had not deliberately used it

at all. Now she had been awakened, and enjoyed the knowledge, but it did not spoil her as yet. She sunned herself in the brilliance of her young life, and the wealth and position in the future were very pleasant to her. If they began to assume more importance than the man who was to bestow them, she did not know it.

The marriage was talked of for the autumn, and Lucia made no objection. Lord Arbuthnot wished it, but would have nothing settled without her free consent. It was to be in the autumn, or winter, or spring, as she pleased. This was said to his mother, repeated by her to Lady Dare, and by himself to Lucia, as he came to her side one afternoon he had been calling in Bruton-street. The views of the powers that be had been communicated to her, and as she stood in the window she was thinking of it, and looking rather grave. Her face brightened a little as the young man came up.

"Are you going?" she said.

"Yes. I have come partly to say good-bye, partly to find out for myself what you wish."

She looked away again without any change of colour. Her thoughts were not such as to lead to any embarrassment—not quite those of most girls in her exact position. Her wishes! What did she wish?

"Well," said Lord Arbuthnot, after waiting a minute. "I will leave you to think of it. Good-bye."

"No, wait," the girl said. "Mamma said the autumn."

"Only if you give full consent. Of course," said the young man, and he took her hand as he spoke, "I need not say what are my wishes; they weigh as nothing against yours."

"I have none," began the girl hurriedly. "At least," correcting herself, with a look that would have done away with any pain her words might have given, "none as against yours."

Wilbraham left her with the understanding that the question was settled. In his own joy he had forgotten to notice that Lucia had certainly been cool about it—with no gladness in look or manner. And when he had gone she stood in the same attitude, looking out on the flowers in the balcony, her face settling into a gloomy perplexity. If she had any distinct thought in her mind, anything she could lay hold of beyond a dull depression, it was that she was irrevocably pledged. Later on, when she was dressed for dinner, she looked for a minute at the picture-like form reflected in the mirror and then locked her hands together with a sudden quick pressure. "The summer—only the summer," she whispered—"such a little time—it will go so soon—so soon!"

From this time there was in her a change, but so imperceptible that no one about her knew it—except the man who loved her. The girl herself only knew that her spirits were uneven, that each morning she woke with a feeling of dread and apprehension, but she did not know that unconsciously she reckoned every day and week. How terribly fast they went. Yesterday it seemed it had been Easter—why June was upon them now—July, August. September was the first autumn month. She did not always look her best, and Lady Dare, quick to notice that, said she was doing too much—visits, rides, to pleasure parties, dancing—Lucia had too little rest.

"I hate rest!" said the girl, rather shortly, and her mother smiled and said—"What will Arbuthnot say?"

"Anything he likes," Lucia answered, with knitted brows and unwonted sharpness.

Lady Dare looked surprised—no more; a girl's pettishness at the first sight of a curb. And when in the afternoon Lucia was so genuinely pleased with a costly ornament her lover brought her she was entirely at ease. Poor mother! who knew less of her own child than the friend of a few months—to think the yearnings and noble rebellion of that rich nature could be quieted by a few glittering baubles—to think over-dancing, overdoing the pursuit of pleasure, would account for listlessness and waywardness, and a restlessness that sought relief in constant excitement;

who never noticed that not unfrequently the girl omitted one name when she ran over those she had met at friends' houses; that she rarely wondered why he came so seldom, rarely spoke of him at all.

"How awfully done up the little Dare looked last night, Afghan Leigh," said Sir Alfred Martindale, an old friend, as Captain Leigh came into the club.

"How do you do, Alf? Am I to recognise Miss Dare under the adjective?" asked Leigh. "Just as you like. She happens to be tall, but she is so fairy-like. I hope her looks won't go off," said Sir Alf, as if he personally would be very much injured by such presumption on Miss Dare's part.

Leigh looked at him for an instant with a something between scorn, pity, and half incredulous surprise. Was it possible that he did not see that Lucia was more beautiful than in her most dazzling days? The young gentleman, quite innocent of the effect he had produced on his companion, drawled out—"I wonder you were never hit in that quarter, Leigh—I was over head and ears, I know."

"Oh that was *comme il faut*—as essential as a coat at Poole's or a button-hole," said Alban, lightly. "Unfortunately the prize is out of reach. And here comes the happy possessor."

"Gossiping?" said young Arbuthnot, as he came up; "now confess it; I heard something of it."

"I was asking Leigh if he didn't think Miss Dare looked done up," said Martindale, as Alban moved away. "You weren't at that ball, Arbuthnot, but he was, and so was I. She danced half the night, and 'pon my word I thought she'd drop."

"Nonsense!" said Will. "Really, Alf, you do exaggerate awfully."

"Fact," was the laconic reply, and Sir Alf crossed the room to compare notes with a sporting friend about the last race. Wilbraham hesitated a second, and then followed Leigh, who had gone to the library.

"I say, Alban," he began, "that for Alf is never worth considering, but you didn't contradict him; do you think there is anything in it?"

"Nothing to be anxious about," said the other, "a little fagged, I suppose—dancing and riding too much."

"But I never noticed anything."

Captain Leigh was silent, with an almost imperceptible shake of the head. The doubt that had crossed him before more than once lay heavy at his heart now. Was it not all a cruel mistake? Was the love Wilbraham thought his all really so? The doubt brought him no pleasure; he only dreaded that the mistake would be discovered when it could not be remedied.

"Don't look so concerned, Will," he said, presently; "she has her mother to take care of her. It's her first season, and she is a popular beauty. She would be hardly human if she did not overdo it a little."

Wilbraham did not seem convinced. They were brothers in all but blood, and the tie was so close that it was difficult for one to deceive the other. For the first time in his life Alban had deviated from the strict truth to his friend, and though it cost him something to do it he was not rewarded with success. Wilbraham said, bluntly:

"It seems to me, old fellow, that you don't quite believe what you are saying. I shall ask Lucia."

"No, don't do that," exclaimed Leigh, earnestly; "don't think of it, Will." Then, calming down, he added, trying to cover his former manner, "She won't like to think we have been discussing her in a club."

"Perhaps not," said Arbuthnot. Alban had not denied his accusation; he noticed that. But already he wished he had not uttered the words, and, as if to atone for them, said, affectionately, "Talk about ill, Alban, you don't look over bright yourself."

Leigh was too "taken aback" to answer immediately. If there was any change in him

he had fancied it too slight for Arbuthnot to notice, wrapped up as he was in other thoughts; but Will was not one of those men whose hearts are too narrow to hold more than one image. He was quicker than Alban—who thought he knew him so thoroughly—had given him credit for; and, besides, there was the keenness of love—a tone in the voice, a passing look, he noticed where others would not. It struck Leigh painfully, too, how much less quick Wilbraham had been with regard to Lucia.

"That wound isn't troubling you again?" asked Will, in the same way.

"No; there is nothing the matter with me. You have got fanciful."

"I have not; but of course," said Arbuthnot, smiling, with a shrug of the shoulders, "if you won't speak truth to-day I can't make you. But you can't do me."

He went off without giving time for a reply. But what had passed rested on his mind. He could not but think that Leigh felt some anxiety—then why did he not express it? How had he seen what Wilbraham himself had not? He watched Lucia for the next few days with sharpened eyes, and marvelled at his own blindness. It was not so much that she looked ill—she looked like a person who is going through a mental struggle; that is to say, when she was not doing something; face and form dropped then into depression, as if the effort at cheerfulness could not be longer sustained. What did it mean? Some instinct—it was little more at present—kept Wilbraham from speaking on the subject to Leigh; he grew slowly into the knowledge that shaped his conduct—it did not come all at once.

Those long bright days! How Lucia dreaded each one as it came. How she questioned and reasoned, and satisfied herself, to have it all undone by a thought, a chance word, and everything had to be gone through again. She had believed honestly enough she loved Lord Arbuthnot—not such love as some women gave their husbands—she knew that; but people did not live in novels, and only a few could expect to put an ideal into existence. That was how she had argued. And then there was the position and power it gave—Lucia did not care for the title. And Wilbraham's devotion had touched her—it was only when the thing was certain, and an every-day marriage was to be looked forward to, that she began to feel that she could not lean on him—to wish there was less adoration and more self-assertion. She struggled painfully to principles that others learn from their cradle; she wondered if it was right to say there would be no sin in this marriage, whether it was not seeking temptation, whether she were not wronging Wilbraham. Had she the right to take so much love and give so little?

Her worldly training had perverted, but not utterly spoiled her, or perhaps that love which lay so deep in her heart had silently done its divine work and taught her sweeter, nobler lessons than any she had learned before. She grew to dread Arbuthnot's coming, to shun meeting him; sometimes it was on her lips to tell him all; then she wondered whether she was justified, even for his sake, to break her promise—whether she ought not to try and love him. She decided she ought, and for a few days was very bright. She had forced herself to think that a duty bravely followed would bring its own reward, that she must succeed in the end. Poor Lucia! paying so bitterly for a mistaken training, and, to a certain extent, her own innocent wrong! Duty was a very feeble standpoint, and such as it was fell ignominiously one day.

They had been—several of them—out into the country. Wilbraham was not with them, and coming back Lucia had been in Captain Leigh's charge. They had been obliged to separate from the rest, and the train had just entered a tunnel when there was a violent shock; then screams and cries of fear, and the ladies in the compartment had sprung up in terror—all but Lucia. She had turned as white as death, but it hardly needed her com-

panion's instant touch on her hand to make her perfectly quiet. Then had come a long anxious waiting, when no one was allowed to leave the train and there was nothing to do but wait. And Lucia had sat by Captain Leigh's side without a word of complaint or even impatience, hardly knowing where they were, in semi-darkness, with all sorts of terrifying conjectures around her, yet she felt so safe as if nothing could harm her. She was his one care, his one thought; he told her so gently "not to be afraid;" he called her "my child," as if the danger had made her to him so tender, helpless thing to be cherished and guarded—not the formal "Miss Dare" that would have set her so far away. And then it had been in her mind half dreamily, what matter how long they were here, or what happened if she were to die here? Why then that terrible future would be gone—and she would be with him. How could she be afraid? Was she dreaming, what were these wild thoughts? They were moving on—going home—back to the misery and doubt. And oh! what bitter doubt it was now—what dense shadows had gathered round her? He told her smiling she was "very brave," and her heart throbbed and then grew cold. Brave—no, only faithless and disloyal and shamed—living on his smile, his words of praise, scorning herself, and wishing she could have died as she sat beside him.

And now she stood alone—in utter perplexity on the brink of a terrible wrong, bound by a promise she dared not keep and she dared not break; going to a husband's home with her heart not in his keeping, nor in her own; feeling his every careless word as if they seared her, with no one to help or counsel, and inexorable Time refusing to be stayed.

CHAPTER VII.

LORD ARBUTHNOT, always gay and in irrepressible high spirits, had grown grave in these last few days. He was possessed by one thought, one idea, and to find a solution for what troubled him he must go to Lucia herself. Neither his mother nor Alban could be of the least use. Of course the change in him did not escape his friend, but he never said a word—perhaps he did not dare to—though he surely must have guessed something, if not all of the truth. He was glad enough just now to accept an invitation from his uncle to go down to Winnorton, though he was sure the quiet of the Deanery would be scarcely bearable. Still it was better than knowing that the old confidence between Wilbraham and himself was impaired—that Wilbraham had a trouble that he would not share, that he tried to wear a mask to him. His one dread was that anything should come between them.

"Already," said Leigh, bitterly standing in the moonlit Deanery garden, "already it is not quite the same. She has come between us, though I have striven so against it. He is afraid to be frank with me. Oh, Will, Will, what if you think me false! Heaven knows I am not. I loved her from the first moment I saw her—that was no wrong to you, then! I wish I had never seen her—for your sake!"

There was no soothing power for him in the stillness—no welcome relief from the roar and movement of London. His own consciousness was doubly strong now there was nothing to divert thought. Only that day the Dean had said to him, laying his hand on the dark head, "When you bring me some pretty lassie who has won your heart, my boy, I will take care of her. I always meant to dower your bride." And Alban had laughed and answered he did not suppose the dower would ever be wanted, but the Dean had insisted that he should have his way.

"What the deuce," said Sir Alfred Martindale, meeting Arbuthnot in the park one morning, "has Afghan Leigh gone and buried himself at Winnorton for? It's horrid without him, and you are as doleful as a Methodist. Then there is the Dare—didn't turn up at the garden party yesterday. Isn't she any better?"

"No, I think not," answered Will, rather shortly.

"So sorry. Is Leigh so attentive to his uncle because he'll have his tin? He will, won't he?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"I used to wonder he didn't tumble in love with Miss Dare; you won't mind my saying it now you're booked and safe," said Sir Alf, in his heavy good-natured way. "Odd he didn't, wasn't it?"

Sir Alf always ended with a question, as if he were never certain of his own views.

"He isn't particularly rich, but he will be, so he could marry if he chose."

"Yes, of course," said Wilbraham, without an idea what he was saying.

"And," pursued the blundering young man, "girls are always so fond of those dashing fellows. Wish I had his chances."

Arbuthnot could not, for five minutes afterwards, remember what part he had taken in this conversation. He was so dazed with pain and confusion that he answered at random; and finally, somehow shaking off Martindale, went home and flung himself down by the table, with his head in his hands. The careless gossip of a fop had shown him clearly what he had dimly guessed before. This, then, was the solution. His anguish was not at first for himself, it was for Lucia, and more than all, for his old schoolmate. Which love, then, was the stronger?

"I have been blind! mad!" said the poor fellow, when he could think at all. "I to give him such cruel suffering—I who love him better than life! Dear old Alban!"—this with almost a sob—"you have been nobler and best, but you shall not do more for me than I will do for you and her! And he has been always the same; spurred me into courage, was kindness itself when I told him I had won her. How I must have tortured him a thousand times! And Lucia, oh, my darling! Must I give you up? Can you never love me better than you do now?"

Toward the end of that afternoon Lucia was told that Lord Arbuthnot had called, and had asked for her.

"Have you told mamma?" said the girl, rising listlessly. "Is he in the drawing-room?"

"No, miss—he asked to see you alone, and I showed him into your boudoir."

Lucia said she would come, but her heart sank like lead. Slowly, like a child who fears each step of the stair, she went down, and glided into the boudoir so silently that Lord Arbuthnot did not hear her. It was because she felt she was there that he turned so quickly, and came forwards at once.

"Lucia, my poor child!" he said, holding her hands tightly in his. The strange greeting, so full of pity, the quiver in his voice, the look in his face, startled her out of her hardly maintained calmness. And he used to kiss her when he came—why not now? And yet he was not vexed. She trembled in every limb, her colour went and came fitfully. "Please let me sit down," she said, faintly.

He drew forward a low chair with a hurried apology, and moved away a little, waiting till she had recovered herself.

Presently her voice said, very low:

"You wanted to say something? I am quite ready to hear you."

He came then and stood before her, looking down at the beautiful face that was never lifted to him. In his eyes there was a brave sweet look; however, he had gained calmness, through what strivings and despair! There was no falter of lip or voice; he was thinking of her, and of the gallant fellow who had given up more than life for him.

"I only want you," he said, quietly, "to answer one question, little fit as you are even for that."

"A question? I will answer it, of course," she said, moving a little uneasily. "I can hear anything you may say."

"You told me once," said Wilbraham, involuntarily stretching out his hand, "that you loved me—do you love me now?"

There was an instant's breathless pause. Then the girl rose dizzily clinging to the back of the chair, with her eyes on his face half widely—

"Wilbraham!" dropped from her with a grasp, "why—why do you ask that? I—I spoke the truth—indeed, I did. Is not that enough?"

"Aye—enough!" he muttered, turning away and covering his face.

Then she sprang to him, flinging herself at his feet—

"Wilbraham—" she spoke with a terrible strength—"don't turn from me—don't reproach me! I will be true—I will try to love you? I was not false—I will not be—"

"You must not kneel to me," he said, almost sharply, and would have lifted her, but she shrank away.

"No, no! Hear me—forgive if you can! I told you what I thought was truth. Oh! do not think that in asking you not to release me, I have any other motive but your happiness. You will not judge me so hardly. I will try to atone—indeed I will."

"My darling—" He lifted her now, putting his arm about her as with a passionate sob, she hid her face on his shoulder.

"I do not misjudge you—I could not! But neither can I let your own nobleness shatter your life. You would hold to your promise though your heart is not in it—though it has been breaking day by day, but I will not suffer it. It is not because my love has grown cold—it is because I hold you too near my heart to be myself the one to hurt you. I would thank Heaven and you for your love, but that is not the thing I most desire. I want you to be happy. Hush! don't sob so. I think I see it clearly. You thought you loved me—you believed it then, and after a while you found you had been mistaken, and to you your promise was sacred—so you tried to force yourself to be happy in it. You did not know—how should you? that it is better I should know the truth now—that to leave me to discover it afterwards would be rather cruelly than kindness."

"I thought," the girl said brokenly, "I could learn to love you; you were so good, and I gave you so much love."

"Yes, as you would have given to your brother," said Wilbraham sadly, and he could not feel thankful for that measure of love at this minute; it was so poor compared to what he had thought was his, and knew had not been.

"You break my heart!" said the girl, drawing herself back from him, and almost wringing her hands. "If you would only tell me I have deceived you, only look a reproach! I have been worse than you think. If," she hesitated, her head drooped, her words came falteringly; "if you had been obscure, if you had not been the heir to an old name and a high station it would have been different. I should have seen more clearly. I was dazzled and proud, and it seemed to me that what love I felt was sufficient for your happiness and mine. Afterwards—I cannot tell how—I saw what my future life would be; but I strove—oh, if you despise me, still believe that one good of me—to be true, to put aside all thought that wronged you. I have failed, and you have learned what I never meant you to learn. You know that I have betrayed your love, your faith in me, that I am not worthy to hold the place I have held. There is but one comfort, bitter though even that is—I have told you the whole truth at last, and you know me for what I am."

She had spoken all through in tones of deepest self-accusation, with her hands locked rigidly, her face bent down; and Wilbraham, not offering to interrupt her, had listened without looking at her, save once or twice fleetingly. But as she finished he lifted his head abruptly.

"I know you for what you are; yes," he said, "and I am unchanged. For my sake, for the sake of your vows to me, you put yourself aside, you suffered, you would have died sooner than yield. Is that to make me despise you? Is that to make me lose faith in

you? I think of you less hardly than you think of yourself; there is nothing to me in this confession I have listened to, because you wished it, not because I needed to hear it, that should take one iota from the love I bear you, the honour in which I hold you."

"There must be—there is!" cried the girl; "you thought me above you—an idol to be worshipped—and I am only commonest clay! You must not love me—I who despise myself so utterly, who am so pitifully beneath you. Despise me, and you cannot love me then. I could bear that more easily than this."

"Lucia! Lucia!" he clasped the girl, now weeping bitterly, close to him, still preserving his calmness, lest she should see how much he suffered. "I cannot let you speak so of yourself, my poor child, you must not sob so. One day, love, you and I may be thankful for this parting."

His voice broke here beyond control, though he tried to be so brave. He bent his face down on the girl's head, and was perforce silent. Whether Alban Leigh were right or wrong, this parting was to him as terribly hard as if his love were really unalterable. Though no word had escaped his lips or Lucia's as to any other love in her heart, he knew it was there, and no human being could have failed to feel the fact—a very bitter addition to a load sufficiently heavy. Someone else held the jewel he would have worn—for someone else the light shone which his steps had followed—the jewel which was more precious the light more brilliant than ever before. Still they were not for him—still he must forget himself. He whispered to her to look up, to listen to him; he must leave her; and then he placed her in the chair and knelt beside her, only keeping one hand in his while he spoke.

"You blame yourself so much, Lucia; but if I had not been careless, and perhaps selfish, I should have seen this sooner. At least I can spare you now. I will explain all to your mother and mine. I cannot speak of the future now. I have only one thing to ask you—that you will never dream I have a hard thought of you."

"Will! Will!" said the girl, in anguish, "if I had only been like you! I have never been taught,—I was in such thick darkness—tossed between right and wrong, and nowhere to look for aid. I dare not ask forgiveness."

"And I will not give it," said the young man very gravely, and he bent forward and kissed her—not a lover's kiss, but such as we may lay on a dead face, passion lost in pain. Where in his careless life had he learnt such self-repression? Then he rose. The girl looked up at him with dimmed eyes. Something more she longed to be able to say—to tell him that the love that was parting them had come while she was free—that she was guiltless of that wrong to him; but her tongue was perforce bound. Yet he must have read aright the look in those earnest appealing eyes, for he said as if she had spoken—"You have not wronged me," very gently and went out. No one saw him again that day, suffering and alone for the first time in his young life, cut off from the one friend to whom he had turned in lighter troubles. And still that friend's self-sacrifice seemed to him supreme. What is a death in the midst of battle, to the dying by inches from a dozen wounds?

CHAPTER VIII.

LATE that night Lord Arbuthnot had resolved on his present course. He must leave England without doubt, and of course his father and mother must know the truth—and from him. To Lady Dare he would write; and then came a *crux*. He could not leave England without seeing Alban Leigh; it was bad enough not to ask him to be his companion, but for both their sakes that could not be; Alban would understand that. But if he did not see him Leigh would perhaps imagine there was coldness between them, that Wilbraham thought himself wronged. That was not to be borne. The rare love between the

two men had never been, could never be again, so tested and proved. There had not been in either heart a hard thought or a passing feeling of estrangement, and yet Wilbraham might have been forgiven had there been such. He was a good deal in the dark—he did not know anything certainly, and he could not ask—he had nothing to rest on but faith, and yet that never wavered. He hesitated a good deal as to presenting himself suddenly before Leigh with an announcement which might throw him off his guard. He had better write first; and accordingly, after many beginnings that had no endings, wrote a short note, simply stating the breaking of his engagement because he had discovered a change of feeling in Lucia, and that he was coming to Winnemorton to say goodbye before leaving England. No word or hint that he strongly suspected his friend's secret—that a hundred little things that he had not noticed at the time had almost convinced him he was right.

Lady Madenham was inclined to be indignant when her son told her he was going abroad, and his reason. She looked at him in doubt. This grave determined man did not seem like her light-hearted boy, who had always a jest and a laugh, and so seldom asserted himself, not from want of will, but from carelessness. He checked her when she began hotly to blame Lucia, firmly, yet without losing one iota of respect.

"No, mother," he said; "I cannot hear her blamed; she has tried to do what she thought her duty. That she failed in a terribly hard task was not her fault, and it was I who insisted on releasing her. If you love me you will show no change to her; she would have kept her promise—not because she wished to, but because she thought it right."

"How can I be unchanged to her? She has spoiled your life," said Lady Madenham, bursting into tears.

Then Wilbraham soothed her, and said he would not be long away, and pleaded so winningly for Lucia that his mother at last smiled and kissed him, and promised to do and think as he wished.

But Lucia had a less easy task. Lady Dare was terribly vexed. "Such a talk," she said, "you will get the character of a flirt, a girl who does not know her own mind. I thought you had more strength of mind—more reason—my dear. And of course the Madenham will be cool. I understand Arbuthnot's chivalry, unusual though it is, but I don't understand you. I should have thought any girl might care for him unless she had some one else in her head."

Lucia shivered and turned her face aside. It was anguish enough to know that she loved Alban Leigh; to believe that he did not love her, without any probing of her wounds. She said it was unalterable—anything was better than doing such wrong to one like Arbuthnot—any suffering or scorn laid on her. Her mother looked at the girl, sitting in an attitude of utter listlessness, seeming worn out, and not raising a single protest against reproach, and the mother's love triumphed over disappointed pride and worldliness. She bent over the girl, drawing her head to her breast, and then the poor child gave way, sobbing as if her heart would break. It was minutes before she could speak or even look up. Then she whispered—

"Mother, don't blame me any more, I have been so wretched. Don't change to me."

"My own child," said Lady Dare, tenderly, "why won't you be frank with me? You will be happier if you tell me all. Are you not keeping something back?"

"Don't ask me—I can't tell you," said the girl, hiding her face, and for a long time she rested in the same position, and neither uttered a word till Lady Dare asked softly, "Would she like to leave London at once?" Lucia seized hold of the idea with feverish eagerness, and before night their plans were nearly settled.

It was not till just before he left England that Arbuthnot went down to Winnemorton. Leigh had yielded to his uncle's earnest wish to keep

him a little longer, and so it was in the old Deanery that the two friends met again after little more than a fortnight's separation; but that fortnight had changed the current of either life. They felt it as they stood together, and the two faithful hands closed so clingingly one over the other. Will longed to tell him his love was unchanged, nay, deeper than ever, and that his trust had never faltered; to tell him he knew how he had suffered and for him; but he only held the strong hand and looked into the grey eyes, and then felt that such words were hardly needed.

"How long will you be away?" were Leigh's first words.

"I don't know. You got my letter?"

"Yes."

A pause; then Wilbraham said, a little wistfully,—

"You mustn't blame her, Alban."

"No, certainly not. You do not."

"Thanks; I knew you would not. They have gone to Florence till the spring."

"And you—where are you going?"

Then they discussed places and routes; and the Dean came in and was happy in going over old recollections and comparing notes with the two young men; and painful topics were put out of sight.

"Good-bye, Alban," said Wilbraham, brightly, as they parted at the station. "Don't be afraid for me, old fellow."

"God keep you!" Leigh answered, hoarsely, and could not have uttered another word for his life. And then he was walking back through the scented lanes, and wishing he had died out in that Indian hospital.

The winter that followed seemed long and dreary. His regiment came home in the course of it, and being ordered to rejoin he was for some time quartered in a seaside town, not within very easy reach of London. True, Major Allison was there also, and their mutual obligation made them fast friends; but Leigh's life seemed just now so broken that he could only live, as it were, from day to day, putting aside both past and future, and learning to bear his burden as though he had none to bear. He felt as if he had injured Wilbraham; and the constant and bright letters he got from him were looked forward to eagerly. Incidentally, from one and another, he heard of Lucia. Christmas was passed with the Madenhams, and the marchioness had plenty to tell him about her; how she had recovered her old health, and they were coming to London in the spring. "And of course," she said, "you know Will has been in Paris?"

"Yes; he wrote from there the other day."

"The Fonblanques are there," said she.

Alban began to laugh. "Poor Will! you have not forgotten my telling you about that old nonsense, Lady Madenham; but unless I am very much mistaken he is off to Spain."

"I daresay he is. Never mind," said her ladyship, complacently; "go and order the horses, Alban, and you can drive me."

At the end of the winter Lord Arbuthnot's letters were again dated from Paris. Leigh laid down his first letter with a curious mixture of feelings. Had he been right in his old idea that that love for Lucia Dare had not been lasting? If another and truer love had taken its place had he no right to rejoice; need he stand aside any longer? The flash of joy dazzled him; his love for Lucia was unchanged, and fervent as of old.

"Not till I hear from his own lips that he has no love for her left," he said, "will I consider myself free."

His longing to see her, to be only in her presence was almost irresistible—almost, not quite; his exquisite sense of honour was still as ever paramount, and that forbade him to go within the circle of temptation. He knew she was in London; there were a hundred excuses he could have made to run up to town, but he made none. The prosaic round of daily life in a provincial city was fretting and scarcely bearable, but it was the safest, and he would not leave it.

Lucia returned to London very much her

old self. She was only eighteen, and of a vivacious temperament, and this combination would have rendered it difficult for any one to see a change in her. There was none worth speaking of; only at times a sweet gravity was in her face and mien. She had not yet forgiven herself; she never could, until she knew Wilbraham Arbuthnot had forgotten her—so far as a man who is worth anything does utterly forget a first love, so that it leaves no impress at all on him. Lucia knew his movements because Marion Fonblanque wrote her long letters in which he was occasionally mentioned—not very much, and hope began to grow in Lucia's mind.

What else should keep him in Paris, away from his parents, who were longing to see him, away from Alban Leigh? Something; it must be more potent than ordinary friendship.

One day Major Allison, coming into Leigh's rooms, brought a letter with him which he had just taken from the postman. "Don't stand on ceremony," said he, throwing himself into the easiest chair in the room; "besides, it's from your old chum—same handwriting as those pamphlets you used to get in India."

Captain Leigh opened the envelope without hesitation; besides, the major was comfortably occupied with his best cigars and a magazine, and did not want to be talked to. "I am coming home, Alban," wrote Wilbraham, "so expect me at the 'confounded hole' you tell me about (those are your own words) any time this week. The mater will blow up if I don't go there first. Did you wonder why I have not run over to see you all this time? I'll tell you when I come."

And a few days afterwards into that pretty sitting-room overlooking the sea walked the young heir of Madenham, looking so delightfully happy that a misanthrope must have smiled at him. He greeted Alban in his old light-hearted way, save for one very scrutinising look in the dark face; and when the first few moments were over—trying enough to Alban—seated himself in the identical chair the Major had occupied, and began to talk by declaring he was "too happy to live." That evening was given up to talk of school days and later doings in Paris—again on the old loving footing so dear to both; care and disappointment were laid aside, and it was long past midnight before either sought rest.

(To be concluded next week).

FACETIÆ.

AN EX-PLAINER.—A retired carpenter.

TO MAKE A VENETIAN BLIND.—Put out his eyes.

A NATURAL SUPPORTER OF THE CLOTURE.—The Earl of Cork.—Punch.

THE most impudent of all things is a mirror, for it is continually casting reflections.

WHEN you give a piece of your mind, take care that it is not the biggest.

To find the value of a pound at any price, try to borrow one when you are hard up.

How much ground does a hen occupy at night?—A perch.

Mock philanthropy has been fitly described as "giving a mermaid a pair of boots."

WHAT the country has never seen, and never will, is a hen that can lay a wager.

A RESTAURANT-KEEPER advertises for "a boy to open oysters fifteen years old."

YOUNG men nowadays look upon their fathers merely as the "relieving officer."

A GENTLEMAN saw an advertisement that a cure for dyspepsia might be had by sending a postage-stamp to the advertiser. He sent his stamp, and the answer was, "Dig in your garden and let whiskey alone."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Jones, to see this fine field of potatoes so diseased," said a sympathising inspector. "Ah well; there's no denying it's a

pity," replied the farmer; "but there's one comfort, Job Johnson's are not a bit better."

A SUNDAY-SCHOOL teacher examined his pupils thus: "What is the meaning of the word repentant?" "Please, sir, I don't know." "Now if I had stolen a loaf of bread, what should I be?" "Please, sir, looked up." "Well, should I be sorry?" "Yes." "Well, why should I feel sorry?" "Please, sir, 'cause you was caught."

THE FINER JOKE OF THE TWO.—We received a jest in verse, bright and catchy, and, though it bore no signature, inserted it. A few days after a letter informed us that the author had sent it anonymously in order that it might be judged on its own merits, the editor being unbiassed by the author's name. The name was Smith.

CHILDREN are inquisitive bodies; for instance: "What does cleave mean, pa?" "It means to unite together." "Does John unite wood when he cleaves it?" "Hem! well it means to separate." "Well, does a man separate from his wife when he cleaves to her?" "Hem, hem! Don't ask so many foolish questions, child."

Two sons of Erin, shovelling on a hot day, stopped to rest and exchange views on the labour question. "Pat, this is mighty hard work we are at." "It is indee, Jemmy; but what kind of work is it you'd like, if you could get it?" "Well," said the other, leaning reflectively on his shovel, and wiping the perspiration from his brow with the back of his hand, "for a nice, aisy, clean business, I think I should like to be a bishop."

LENGTH AND DEPTH.—A young man having preached for Doctor Candlish one day, was anxious to get a word of applause for his labour of love. The grave doctor, however, did not introduce the subject, and his younger brother was obliged to bait the hook for him. "I hope, sir," he said, "I did not weary your people by the length of my sermon to-day?" "No, sir, not at all; nor by the depth, either." The young man was silent.

SOMEWHAT INTERESTED.—One afternoon a stranger, observing a stream of people entering a church, approached a man of gloomy aspect, who was standing near the entrance, and asked: "Is this a funeral?" "Funeral! no," was the sepulchral answer. "It's a wedding." "Excuse me," added the stranger, "but I thought from your serious look that you might be a hired mourner." "No," returned the man, with a weary, far-off look in his eyes. "I'm a son-in-law of the bride's mother."

THE following story is told not exactly at the expense of a college professor, the author of an article on "Ancient Methods of Flirtation," which recently appeared in one of the magazines. By a misprint his subject was announced in the advertisement as "Ancient Methods of Flirtation," much to the amusement of his friends, one of whom, the other evening, at a social party, said to him: "Professor, do give us your lecture on 'Ancient Methods of Flirtation.'" The professor, who is a bachelor and a social favourite, instantly replied: "Miss—, that lecture can only be delivered to a single auditor at a time, and must be illustrated with experiments."

THEY DO THEIR OWN KISSING.—A very exacting landlord makes his tenants "come to time" on the day the rent becomes due, and will only relax his stern decrees when a handsome woman is in question. Not long since he called for his rent of a very worthy mechanic, who, by-the-way, rejoices in the possession of a very pretty little wife. The husband was not at home when Shylock called, and he was enchanted with the pretty little wife of the tenant. She could not liquidate the amount due; but the landlord, becoming really enamoured, told her he would give her a receipt in full for just one kiss. "Sir," said she, "myself and husband are very poor; perhaps we cannot pay our rent; but I tell you, sir, we're not so poor but that we can do our own kissing."

SOCIETY.

COWES REGATTA.—The Princess of Wales visited the popular Cowes Regatta on Friday, the 14th ult., with her three daughters. Her Royal Highness, who was on a steam launch, took great interest in the events, especially the duck hunt. The gown worn was a ruby blue serge, sailor hat, and sunshade to match. The young Princesses were all three dressed alike in dark blue serges, braided with white. H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, and the Princesses Sophie and Margaret of Prussia were likewise present.

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF ALBANY has forwarded a donation of £25 towards the restoration of Queenborough Church, in commemoration of Queenborough being the first town entered by the Duchess of Albany upon her arrival in England.

THE CROWN PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF GERMANY are visiting Lord Amphil in Switzerland.

PRINCE HENRY OF PRUSSIA will start next October, in the *Oiga*, for a voyage round the world. The Prince is expected to be absent about a year and a-half.

LADY ANNE GRENVILLE'S wedding-dress was composed of white satin duchesse, trimmed with fine old Buckingham lace and real orange blossoms, myrtle, and stephanotis; a wreath of the same flowers was covered by a tulle veil fastened with diamond pins, the gift of the bridegroom. The bridesmaids were attired in cream-coloured costumes.

THE MARQUIS OF LORNE is a great admirer of the national game of lacrosse, and both he and the Princess frequently attend the matches which take place, her Royal Highness on such occasions graciously and gratefully consenting to place the ball for the "face," as the action which starts the game is called. His Excellency is also often to be seen watching the evening practices in Quebec.

THE KING OF GREECE is coming to England in the course of the autumn, on a visit to his sister, the Princess of Wales, at Marlborough House.

THE PRINCESSES LOUISE, VICTORIA, and MAUD of Wales, and the Princess Victoria Mary of Teck, attended by Mlle. Vauthier and the Rev. T. Teignmouth Shore, recently paid a visit to the Tower, where their Royal Highnesses were received by Gen. Maitland, C.B., the Lieutenant of the Tower, who conducted the royal party over the building, pointing out all the places and objects of historic interest.

GLADYS, COUNTESS OF LONSDALE, has determined to remain in town, now the general exodus has taken place. She has taken Lord Claud Hamilton's house in Lowndes-square for the autumn and winter months.

THE MARRIAGE of Captain George Rowley Hadaway, R.A., and the Lady Anne Grenville, second daughter of the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, was solemnized in the parish church of Wotton, Bucks, on August 3. The bride wore a dress of white satin duchesse, trimmed with fine old Buckingham lace, the gift of her father, and real orange flowers, myrtle, and stephanotis. A wreath of the same flowers was covered by a tulle veil, fastened with diamond pins, the gift of the bridegroom. Her other ornaments were pearls. The bridesmaids were attired in costumes of cream-nun's veiling and silk trimmed with lace and blush roses, lace bonnets with wreaths of blush roses and cream ostrich feathers. The bridegroom's gift to each was a brooch with the initials of the bride and bridegroom in diamonds. After the celebration of the marriage the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos entertained those present at the church on the occasion at breakfast at Wotton House. The bride and bridegroom have gone to Yorkshire. The bride's travelling dress was of electric blue moiré and satin, with bonnet to match, trimmed with an aigrette and feathers.

STATISTICS.

THERE are said to be 4,500 theatres in the United States.

It has been computed that 2,500,000 watches and 4,000,000 clocks are annually turned out in different parts of the world.

THE POST OFFICE.—No institution in the kingdom shows such an enormous development as the Post Office since the establishment of the penny post. The number of letters sent through the post previous to that time averaged three per head of the population. Last year 1,290,354,000 letters passed through the Post Office. Post-cards numbered 134,320,000; this is exclusive of book-packets and circulars. Newspapers numbered 141,000,000. In Christmas week 12,500,000 letters and packets passed through the central office, there being four and a half tons of registered letters among them. Valentines despatched from the central office numbered 1,684,000. The letters, packets, and post-cards received from foreign countries and the colonies were 69,000,000; those sent from England 87,000,000. Telegraphic messages numbered 31,345,861, an increase of nearly two millions. Of postal money orders 4,462,920 were issued for £2,006,917, mostly in small sums ranging from one to twenty shillings.

GEMS.

DO your business promptly, and bore not a business man with long visits.

JEALOUSY is the sentiment of property, but envy is the instinct of theft.

FALSEHOOD and fraud shoot up in every soil the product of all climes.

MAKE yourself useful, and you will always be in demand at fair wages.

HOLD on your hand when you are about to do an improper act.

SPEAK well of your friends—of your enemies say nothing.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

WATERCRESS BUTTER.—Pick the leaves of a quantity of watercress, and mince them as fine as you can; then dry them in a cloth, mince them still more and dry them again, then knead them with as much fresh butter as they will take up, adding a very little salt and white pepper, and with a couple of buttermen's pats shape your watercress butter into as many pats of as many shapes as you are able to work out.

MULBERRY STRUP.—To two pounds of mulberries, hardly ripe, add two pounds of powdered sugar. Put the fruit and sugar in a preserving pan on a moderate fire, but do not touch with a spoon, or the syrup will be thick. The heat will soon dissolve the fruit of itself, and leave the liquor clear. When thoroughly melted, boil up several times, then let it run gently through a hair-sieve, very clean; all the refuse of the fruit will thus remain in the sieve. The syrup should not require any clearing, if clean utensils are used, and the boiling-up of sufficient duration.

CARAMEL CUSTARDS.—Put a handful of loaf sugar in a saucepan with a little water, and set it on the fire until it becomes a dark brown caramel, then add more water (boiling) to produce a dark liquor like strong coffee. Beat up the yolks of six eggs with a little milk; strain, add one pint of milk (sugar to taste) and as much caramel liquor (cold) as will give the mixture the desired colour. Pour it into a well-buttered mould; put this in a *bain marie* with cold water; then place the apparatus on a gentle fire, taking care that the water does not boil. Half an hour's steaming will set the custard, which then turn out and serve. By using the white of one or two eggs in addition to the six yolks, the chances of the custard not breaking are made more certain.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE new reply post-cards will be issued on October 2nd, at the cost of a little over 1d. apiece. The cards will be made like a return ticket, so that the half intended for the reply can be detached from the remainder.

A COMPANY of Americans has bought Strawberry Hill, with the intention of converting it into a gigantic hotel, on the new England plan. This celebrated property was bought by Horace Walpole in 1748, when the price paid for it was £1,356 10s.

THE Orleans Club has had the honour of contributing some of the tallest scoring on record to the annals of cricket, as in a match against Rickling Green it scored the grand total of 920 in its first innings. Of this Mr. A. H. Trevor was credited with 393, Mr. G. F. Vernon with 259, and Mr. J. C. Partridge with 90.

CETEWAYO on special occasions wears the undress uniform of a general—a dark blue frock coat, braided and frogged scarlet, heavily fringed with gold, and looped with a button, and a peaked cap, with gold braid and top button. His Majesty bears himself in public much as if he had lived in London half his life, with one singular exception. He has no notion of the use of carriage steps. When the carriage was drawn up in the afternoon in the inner courtyard the King, stooping down and altogether ignoring the steps, clambered into the carriage by his knee just as a child gets up stairs. In this action he was followed by his black suite, every man of whom, putting his hands on the seats, scrambled in on his knees. Two of the black suite are Cetewayo's blood relatives. A third, distinguished from the rest by the absence of the black circlet on his head, is the King's hairdresser.

GOING TO SLEEP.

What pleasant thoughts the words suggest—*going to sleep!* It is a soft, spring evening; the birds twitter drowsily at the casements, and the bright, sunny day falls like a tired child, and pillows its golden head upon the lap of Night.

As sweet as the last breath of music, as gentle as the falling of rose-leaves upon a quiet pool, is the drooping of "tired eyelids upon tired eyes."

Step lightly as you approach the cradle, where the shadows, like the bed-clothes of angels, fall.

"Let every sound be dead
Baby sleeps.
The emperor softly tread!
Baby sleeps.
Let Mozart's music stop!
Let Phidias' chisel drop!
Baby sleeps.
Demosthenes, be dumb—
Our tyrant's hour has come!
Baby sleeps."

Of all the poets who have caught the subtle beauty of sleep and bound it in a golden chain of words, who has equalled the author of the "Eve of St. Agnes?"

Seldom has such exquisite diction been wedded to such delicacy of thought as in the following verse:

"Soon trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon perplexed she lay,
Until the poppy warmth of sleep oppressed,
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow day,
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain,
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray,
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut and be a bud again."

Sweet, indeed, as the sleep of children, and beautiful are the poppies that lull loveliness to rest; but the long sleep that crowns a well-spent life is more sacred to us than either. It is the sleep of him who lays his head upon "the lap of earth."

"Like one who draws the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

BLUE RIBBON.—The word should be pronounced *Be-sib* with the first *i* long, as in *sigh*; the second *i* is short as in *kick*, and with the accent on the first syllable.

COCKNEY BILL.—Lord Elcho has prepared an alternative scheme for the improvement of Hyde Park Corner. His plan has been inspected by many members of Parliament.

MISSY.—You will find *plague* in any French dictionary. It means simply a dish or plate, but the word is generally used to describe a plate more or less covered with alleged decorations, and intended for ornament rather than use.

INQUIRING SAM.—The lines:
There is a world where souls are free;
Where tyrants taint not nature's bliss;
If death that world's bright opening be,
Oh, who would live a slave in this!
are by Tom Moore, the author of the "Irish Melodies."

CORA.—Yes, "Can you tell me the name of the Egyptian king whose mummy was lately found? I should also like to have the date of the discovery." The name of the king was *Rameses II.* He was the Pharaoh of the Jewish captivity. The mummy, with thirty-eight others, was found in August, 1881.

RICHARD W.—Go to the young lady's father and tell him plainly that you wish to marry his daughter. The most he can do is to withhold his consent. He can hardly claim to have authority to forbid the marriage of a young woman of twenty, whom he has allowed to earn her own living for five years.

C. B. J.—The position of nursery governess in families is one of *ho-ho*, and the governess is not treated as a "menial." Your spirit is most commendable. Advise for the position you want, and choose what seems to you the best of the offers made by the kindest people. Without doubt you are fully qualified for such a position. It will, we are sure, lead to something better.

SOLDIER'S SISTER.—The French were the first to organize a hospital service in the field. The vehicles which they at first used were cumbersome, but they were gradually improved. The ambulance itself, and what is known as the ambulance system, have been brought to their highest state of development and efficiency since the establishment of the Red Cross Societies.

ANTONIO.—The founder of the present imperial line of Russia was *Michael Romanoff*, who was elevated to the throne in the year 1613. Peter the Great was his grandson, and the present *Czar* is circuitously descended from the same Romanoff line. There have been so many assassinations, and such strange admixtures in the Romanoff family, that it is difficult to say just exactly where the line of descent has actually run.

MECHANIC.—The mixture or preparation for "japaning" leather consists simply of linseed oil and Prussian blue, the last coat being of linseed oil and lamp-black, put evenly over the surface as it lies spread out on a table. If any machine has been made to supersede the hand in this part of the work we do not know it. In the blacking of skins a mixture of ox blood and acetate of iron is now very often used.

LOVEY.—The favourite hat for travelling this year is the sailor, the material straw, black, white, or a mixed straw, generally trimmed with a band of ribbed ribbon in two colours, like those of a cricketing club or an order ribbon, but very often displaying flowers, which for travelling had far better be left at home. Toques are not quite things of the past, but the sailor and the Langtry hat, the same as the bonnet without strings, are rapidly superseding them.

JENNIE.—1. Velvet skirts are made with the nap running up. 2. Nothing can be done to remedy silk that wears glossy. This is the result of glycerine having been used in the making of the silk. The glycerine comes out. You might try sponging off the glossy parts with lukewarm beer and water, using a piece of the goods. 3. Watch-pockets are put upon the outside of baggages, instead of being set on, as formerly. 4. A crimson plush undershirt with a pale pink satin overdress would make you an elegant ball-dress.

MARY M.—There is much imprudence in an unreasonable jealousy. It is a sure way to drive your husband from you. His rights to society were abridged by marriage, but to demand of him the total sacrifice of his friendships and associations is to place him in a very humiliating position. No magnanimous or just woman will justify you in that, and the young lady referred to very properly resents the "home rule" over her friend. Our advice would be to make the lady your friend as she is of your husband.

SARA F.—So many little children are given to the habit you mention that some mothers regard it as a kind of matter-of-course and do not treat it with severity of punishment, but you being only an elder sister must needs rule rather by love and moral suasion than by force. It is a pitiful thing to do, to beat a little one's tender hand with a ruler. Try never to have the occasion for it, but rather punish by showing your sorrow, your displeasure, your surprise, and prompt the child to candour, truth and submission by applauding and encouraging them.

LARY DICK.—"Bear and forbear" is all well enough, but it argues a kind of negative character which entails a ceaseless submission to *o-hers'* caprices or tyranny. A proper self-assertion is equally a right and a duty where your privileges are abridged and your methods questioned. Since you have succeeded in discovering that the motive of the tyranny is selfish and sordid you certainly will be "justified" in resenting it. If the business is to your taste, and there is profit in it, better pursue it without a partner and thus be independent.

DENNIS MALONE.—The more air a man receives into his lungs in ordinary breathing the more healthy he is likely to be; because an important object in breathing is to remove impurities from the blood. Each breath is drawn pure into the lungs; on its outgoing the next instant it is so impure, so perfectly destitute of nourishment, that if re-breathed without any admixture of a purer atmosphere, the man would die. Hence, one of the conditions necessary to secure a high state of health is that the rooms in which we sleep should be constantly receiving new supplies of fresh air through open doors, windows, or fireplaces. 2. The name *Frank* means "free." Allice a princess.

ORIS.—"What is the secret of beauty? To be beautiful in person one must be born so, and then preserve this inherited beauty by preserving the health. Conform to all its laws in eating, sleeping, bathing, working, and violate none of them. Go to no excesses of any kind. But if you desire to be more beautiful than this, then the mind, the heart, the disposition, must be cultivated in a reasonable way. The will must be trained to concentrate the mind and the emotions disciplined. Kind impulses must be cherished, good deeds performed. All cannot be beautiful in form and features; but all can, if they try, be beautiful in life and character."

ANXIOUS JOE.—1. We should advise you to spend at least another year in learning your business before you attempt to set up on your own account. It would be better for you to work for a small amount with a good photographer, who does work of the first-class, than at a much higher salary with a poor workman. 2. He should work hard, read all the good books he can, cultivate the society of better girls, who are not "heartless coquettes," and forget that he ever was so foolish as to love a woman whom he knew to be unworthy of his love. 3. Photography is a very good business for any one who has a taste for it, but to succeed in it you must work hard and exercise good judgment, just as in any other pursuit. Do good work and let people know, in every legitimate way, that you do so.

IT WAS SO HARD TO SAY GOOD-NIGHT.

It was so hard to say good-night!
We lingered fondly by the stile.
Your eyes were as the starlight bright,
And soft as twilight was your smile.

To cheeks and forehead rose a flush,
Red as the flow of ruby wine;
I spoke—I broke the solemn hush,
And asked you, darling, to be mine.

Your face all white and rigid grew,
Like one who's mock'd by cruel fate;
You answered not, and shook your head,
That my request had come too late.

Ah, me! ah, me! how fast time flies!
With beat of pulse and throb of brain!
We parted, then, with tears and sighs—
We never, never met again!

F. H. S.

LOCHIEL.—It would be impossible to explain, through the medium of these columns, the manner in which the music described should be played. No one but an experienced teacher could impart such information.

SOPHIE.—To restrain excessive perspiration use the following: Water, 2 ounces; diluted sulphuric acid, 40 drops; compound spirit of lavender, 2 drachms; take a tablespoonful twice a-day.

BESS.—We decline giving any advice. The subject is too delicate for the interference of a stranger, if, however well intentioned. Consult your nearest relative, or, if it comes to the worst, your lawyer. You are to be pitied, and we sympathise in your distress, though we cannot offer any advice.

A. R.—Since you have chosen your profession and have been successful in it, it is very doubtful if you could wholly abandon it. Consequently, if you wish to visit your parents, it would be advisable to first inform them of your intentions, and so open a way to their good wishes. Then, if they receive you, explain the whole matter in detail, and show them that it is a perfectly honourable manner of gaining a livelihood, and peculiarly adapted to your tastes. Doubtless they will be won over to your way of thinking, and matters will be satisfactorily adjusted in this manner.

D. R. B.—1. The colour shown on steel in tempering is not due to any chemical change or mechanical condition of the structure directly, but is owing to superficial change in the mechanical condition of the surface, set up by the strains of heating and cooling. 2. We have heard of such an invention as a car-wheel made of saw-dust. It consists of an iron rim of seven inches outward diameter by half an inch thick, fitted with a well-proportioned hub, the space between being filled with pine saw-dust, pressed in so compactly that it is said a pressure of twenty-three tons applied to the hub failed to develop the least sign of weakness.

B. N.—A flirt—or, more correctly, a coquette, for the term *flirt* is badly abused—is a woman who deliberately tries to win men's love for the *express purpose* of rejecting it and triumphing over her victims. You may receive attentions and favours from a dozen gentlemen without being a flirt; and it is arrant nonsense to say that a girl should receive attentions from no gentleman unless she expects to marry him, or to suppose that every man who acts the gallant to a young lady is going to ask her to marry him. A lady may receive attentions from many gentlemen and treat them all with such equal consideration that not one can deem himself preferred above the others. But when she does distinguish one with her favour, and so virtually says to her friends, *this is the man of them all I love*, she should be very sure of her own heart.

ROVER.—The gentleman referred to seems only to be gratifying a selfish desire on his part to win your admiration, forgetting that in so doing he prevents you from making an acceptable match with some one who would be more expeditious in wooing you. Doubtless you have shown him too plainly that you love him, and on that account he does not appreciate it. You should be more circumspect in your actions, and let him understand that your feelings cannot be trampled upon in such a manner. If he intends to marry you, it should be so stated, and then you will know how to act toward him. Do not allow any undue freedom on his part until such time as he shall be entitled thereto.

JAMES.—1. Henry VIII. had six wives, viz., Catharine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catharine Howard and Catharine Parr, who survived him. His first and fourth wives were divorced from him. Jane Seymour died a natural death, and Anne Boleyn and Catharine Howard were beheaded. 2. We do not know of any person or persons from whom you could obtain "ready-made" essays or orations. It would be advisable to write such articles yourself, and not depend upon the productions of other people's brains.

FRED.—Perhaps the young lady is more prudent than you are, and thinks that she had better wait a little longer, before deciding to engage herself to any one. In this case you will be wise to take her sister's advice. Without giving her up, see other friends, work hard, cultivate your mind, and then if in a few years, when you are both old enough to know your own minds, she accepts you, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that she and you are acting on deliberate judgment, and have a better chance of happiness than if you had been engaged at seventeen.

LILLY.—1. Should you find an agreeable person in private society, who seems desirous of making your acquaintance, there is no objection to your meeting his advances half-way, although a formal introduction may not have taken place. His presence in your friend's house should be a sufficient guarantee for his respectability, as otherwise he would not be there. 2. In calling upon a person living in an hotel, it is customary to stop in the parlour and send your card to their rooms. Among very intimate friends this formality is generally dispensed with.

THESE.—1. The engagement ring is worn on the third finger—that is, the finger next the little finger—of the right hand. 2. The wedding ring is worn on the third finger of the left hand. 3. Among the Hebrews the wedding ring was formerly worn on the first finger, but now even they have conformed to the general usage. 4. The question of giving engagement and wedding rings is so old that its origin cannot now be certainly determined. One account is that in making any bargain it was usual to give something as a pledge and token, and as nothing could be more easily carried about, or more securely kept than a ring, this became the token always given to bind the important engagement of marriage. Another explanation is, that as the men in marrying the woman made her the mistress of his house, he handed her his ring, which in early times was used as a signet in place of writing the name, and so denoted the trust and confidence he reposed in his bride.

A. L.—There was such a person as Eugene Aram. He was born in England in 1704. He enjoyed a remarkable reputation for extensive scholarship, acquired under the greatest difficulties, his family being very poor. While serving as a schoolmaster he became implicated in a robbery committed by a man named Daniel Clark, but was discharged for lack of evidence. He went immediately to London, and Clark disappeared mysteriously at the same time. Twenty-five years afterwards Aram was arrested and tried for the murder of Clark. He was convicted and hanged. After his conviction he confessed his guilt, and attempted suicide, but was discovered in time to frustrate his purpose.

GERALD.—Egypt is not a "province" of Turkey; nor even a dependency; but a suzerainty, as is Morocco, or Tunis, or Tripoli. Each and all of them have an independence in internal affairs, but in all foreign relations act under the supervision of the Sultan at Constantinople. The ruler of Egypt, called *Khedive*, is so by virtue of the Sultan's assent, and a tribute which he pays to the Sultan of three million and a half dollars per year. The bond which holds all the Barbary powers and Egypt in this deference to Turkey is that the Sultan is the recognised head of the Mohammedan church. The present war is in reality a rising of the "national" element in Egypt against the English and French who have been rapidly "Christianising" the country by managing its revenues, dividing its offices, &c.

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